

The Atlantic Monthly

MARCH 1997

MARCH 1997

The Worst Thing Bill Clinton Has Done

by Peter Edelman

*With the stroke of a pen the President
has given us a welfare system even
more awful than the one we had*

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A
CAR
IS
BORN.



May 15, 1990:
Inspired by childhood memories, a
designer at Pacifica, Chrysler's California
design studio, scribbles the words
"production hot rod" on a 3"x 5" card.



August 13, 1990:
Designer walks into
colleague's office with
loose sketch of 21st
century open-wheel
roadster. That
evening, a group
gathers to discuss
how it could be built.



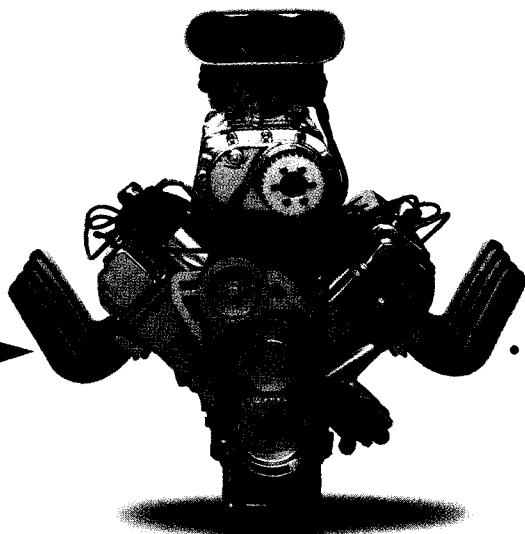
February 1, 1996:
"The only action more outrageous than
creating a Prowler show car is building copies for sale
to the public. Proving that this is not your average
car company, Chrysler Corporation intends to do just
that."- *Motor Trend*, February 1996



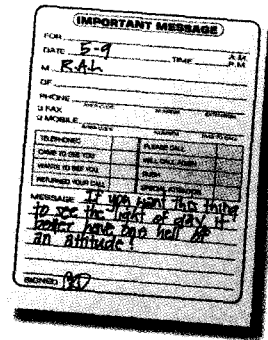
January 10, 1996:
Wearing shades à la Jake and
Elwood, Chrysler Chairman
Bob Eaton and Bob Lutz wheel
Prowler prototype into the
North American International
Auto Show to announce
that it will become a limited
production 1997 Plymouth.

What's the point of building an outrageously cool
concept car if the closest anyone can get to it is
behind a velvet rope at some auto show? That's what
we thought too. At Chrysler Corporation, concept

vehicles aren't just exercises in corporate vanity.
They're laboratories for testing new ideas. When
people respond to those ideas, we pay attention.
Sometimes we incorporate them into your next car,



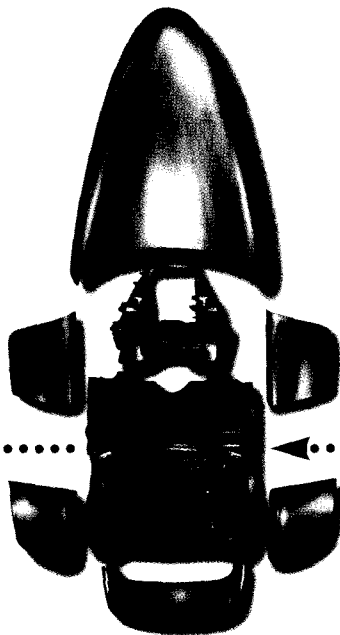
September 18, 1990:
Chrysler Design Chief Tom Gale starts
work on his own custom street rod.



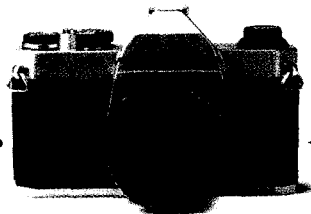
May 9, 1991:
Chrysler top management gets wind of
project. Message from President Bob Lutz:
"If you want this to see the light of day, it
better have one hell of an attitude."



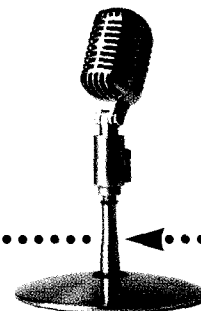
May 20, 1991:
Lutz is shown scale model of
concept car. Grinning, he
agrees with recommendation
to build full-size version.
Project is named "Prowler."



April 15, 1995:
First prototype body parts,
fabricated entirely from
aluminum, are delivered.



January 7, 1993:
Prowler show car
draws huge crowds
at the North American
International Auto
Show in Detroit, followed
by impassioned pleas to
put it into production.



May 10, 1992:
Chrysler team travels to the
NSRA Street Rod Nationals
for research, inspiration,
and rousing performance
by Peter Noone and
Herman's Hermits.

truck, sport utility, or minivan. And sometimes we
actually produce that heart-stopping design you saw
up on the stand. It's what you do when great cars and
trucks are what you're about.

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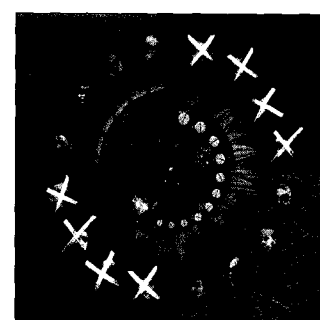
★ CHRYSLER CORPORATION



Page 26



Page 19



Page 73

REPORTS

16 Notes & Comment: And Now for the News

In Edward Gibbon's magisterial history of Rome's decline the past seems perpetually about the present.

by Robert D. Kaplan

19 Language: A War That Never Ends

Recent salvos on questions of grammar and usage.

by Mark Halpern

26 Personal File: Vigilance

What it's like to be the child of someone whose advice about life always comes down to "Watch out!"

by Meg Cimino

HUMOR, FICTION, & POETRY

52 Villanelle After a Burial

A poem

by Steven Cramer

68 A Flight up the Coast

A poem

by Brad Leithauser

80 Welding With Children

A short story

by Tim Gautreaux

43 The Worst Thing Bill Clinton Has Done

The author, a former high Clinton Administration official with responsibility for social policy, resigned his office last year rather than be a party to the President's signing of a "welfare-reform" bill. Here he speaks out for the first time.

by Peter Edelman

60 What Jefferson Helps to Explain

A more dispassionate assessment of Thomas Jefferson offers insights that the gathering indictment can't—into slavery, into democracy, and into the sources of the "American Creed."

by Benjamin Schwarz

73 Whose Right to Die?

Many arguments made in behalf of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia are based on misreadings of history, misinterpretations of data, and sheer misinformation.

by Ezekiel Emanuel

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89 Short Circuit

A drawing

by Guy Billout

ARTS & LEISURE

36 Travel: British Islets

Jersey, Alderney, Sark, the Scillys—these islands aren't

on the way to anything,
which is part of the point.

by Halsy Shields

90 Music: An Audubon in Sound

Olivier Messiaen's brilliant fantasias woven from the songs of birds.

by Matthew Gurewitsch

BOOKS

97 The Revolution Upon Us

One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism, by William Greider

by Lester C. Thurow

100 The Laureate as Onlooker

Sun Under Wood, by Robert Hass

by Peter Davison

103 China's Strategic Culture

Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History, by Alastair Iain Johnston

by Warren I. Cohen

105 Brief Reviews

by Phoebe-Lou Adams

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

4 77 North Washington Street/Contributors

8 Letters

14 The March Almanac

107 The Puzzler

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

108 Word Court

by Barbara Wallraff

Cover art by Robert Goldstrom

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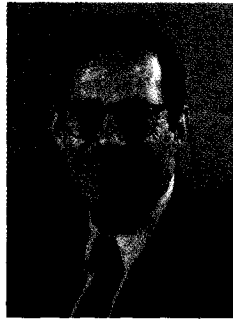
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THAN YOU



77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

IN signing the welfare bill that Peter Edelman deplores in this month's cover story, President Bill Clinton quoted a line from Robert F. Kennedy: "Work is the meaning of what this country is all about. We need it as individuals, we need to sense it in our fellow citizens, and we need it as a society and as a people." Edelman, who had already decided to resign his Administration position as the assistant secretary for planning and evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services in protest over the bill, saw it as a twisting of history that Clinton would misappropriate Robert Kennedy's words to justify legislation that Kennedy would most likely have deplored—legislation that won the President's signature mainly in the service of his political survival. Edelman's reaction still resonates in "The Worst Thing Bill Clinton Has Done."

A liberal by weathered conviction, Edelman has grown skeptical about calls for government programs without accompanying emphasis on community and personal responsibility. Nevertheless, he shares the vision of the Kennedys, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, and every other President since FDR, that the national government has a responsibility to provide a safety net for poor children.



Peter Edelman was born in Minneapolis and educated at that city's West High School, at Harvard College, and at Harvard Law School. He served as a law clerk to Supreme Court Justice Arthur J. Goldberg before taking a job in the Kennedy Administration's Justice Department. This led him, of course, to Robert Kennedy. In the years after

Kennedy's death Edelman held a variety of public-service positions before joining the faculty at Georgetown University Law Center. He has been the vice president of the University of Massachusetts and the director of the New York State Division for Youth, and has written many articles and op-ed columns on public-policy issues ranging from poverty to privacy. An essay he published in the *Hastings Law Journal* in 1987 bore the elegant, provocative, and stirring subtitle "Rethinking Our Duty to the Poor." In 1968 he married Marian Wright, now known as Marian Wright Edelman, the founder of the Children's Defense Fund. The Edelmans have three children of their own, but they have also managed over their distinguished professional careers to extend toward all children a remarkable degree of what they feel toward their own. —THE EDITORS

CONTRIBUTORS

Meg Cimino ("Vigilance"), an attorney and a writer, lives in New York City.

Warren I. Cohen ("China's Strategic Culture") teaches history at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and directs the Asia Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, at the Smithsonian Institution.

Steven Cramer ("Villanelle After a Burial") teaches literature at Bennington College. He is the author of *The World Book* (1992) and *Dialogue for the Left and Right Hand*, to be published next month.

Peter Davison ("The Laureate as Onlooker") is the poetry editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*. His books include *The Fading Smile: Poets in Boston* (1994) and *The Poems of Peter Davison 1957–1995*, just published in a paperback edition.

Peter Edelman ("The Worst Thing Bill Clinton Has Done") is a professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center.

Ezekiel Emanuel ("Whose Right to Die?") is an associate professor at Harvard Medical School. He is the author of *The Ends of Human Life: Medical Ethics in a Liberal Polity* (1991) and a member of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission.

Tim Gautreaux ("Welding With Children") is a professor of English at Southeastern Louisiana University and the author of *Same Place, Same Things* (1996).

Robert Goldstrom (cover art) is an artist whose work has been exhibited widely in the United States. His awards include gold and silver medals from the Society of Illustrators, a silver medal from the Society of Publication Designers, and numerous certificates of merit and of excellence presented by the Society of Illustrators and *Communication Arts*.

Matthew Gurewitsch ("An Audubon in Sound") is a cultural essayist and lecturer in New York City.

Mark Halpern ("A War That Never Ends") is a technical editor at Scopus Technology, a software company in California.

Robert D. Kaplan ("And Now for the News") is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*. His latest book, *The Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, has just been published in a paperback edition.

Brad Leithauser ("A Flight up the Coast") is a poet and novelist. His latest novel, *The Friends of Freeland*, was published in January.

Benjamin Schwarz ("What Jefferson Helps to Explain") is the executive editor of *World Policy Journal* and a senior fellow at the World Policy Institute.

Hatsy Shields ("British Islets") writes regularly on travel and the arts.

Lester C. Thurow ("The Revolution Upon Us") is a professor of management and economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and was dean of the Sloan School of Management, at MIT, from 1987 to 1993. His most recent book, *The Future of Capitalism: How Today's Economic Forces Shape Tomorrow's World*, was published last year.



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LETTERS

No-Frills Jesus

The article of mine that Charlotte Allen ("The Search for a No-Frills Jesus," December *Atlantic*) calls "an essay on the Gospels" in fact was on the Gospel of Saint Matthew. And the sentence of which she quotes a "quasi-mathematical" snippet read in its circumspect entirety, "While Matthew and Luke did not have exactly the same Q in front of them, and small discrepancies abound, it is roughly true that Matthew = Mark + Q and that Luke = Mark + Q + the considerable body of narrative and preaching present only in Luke, called by some scholars S."

It seemed strange, by the way, to read a lengthy investigation of early Christianity without a single reference to the oldest documents in the New Testament, the epistles of Paul, which show a cosmic incarnational theology already in place.

John Updike
Beverly Farms, Mass.

Lawrence Briskin
Centerville, Ohio

I read the article about Q with disbelief. All those people in contention about the contents of a manuscript that does not exist, is not known to have existed, and most likely never existed. Do you wonder that people believe in flying saucers?

David A. Gibson
Spencerport, N.Y.

Charlotte Allen primarily attempts to show how the various Gospels relate to one another and to a potential Q, or source document. There is another approach to trying to understand them. It is well known that the writers of the Gospels lived many years after the death of Jesus. They knew little of His life and believed that all was foretold in the Hebrew Bible. Therefore they believed that if they searched the Hebrew Bible properly, they could find the life of Jesus. This explains the strong parallelism between the Gospels and the Hebrew Bible—for example, the Bethlehem birth, going down to Egypt, twelve disciples,

and so forth. In many cases the Gospels announce items taken from the Hebrew Bible; whenever the words "as it is written" or "to be fulfilled" are used, the event is a borrowing.

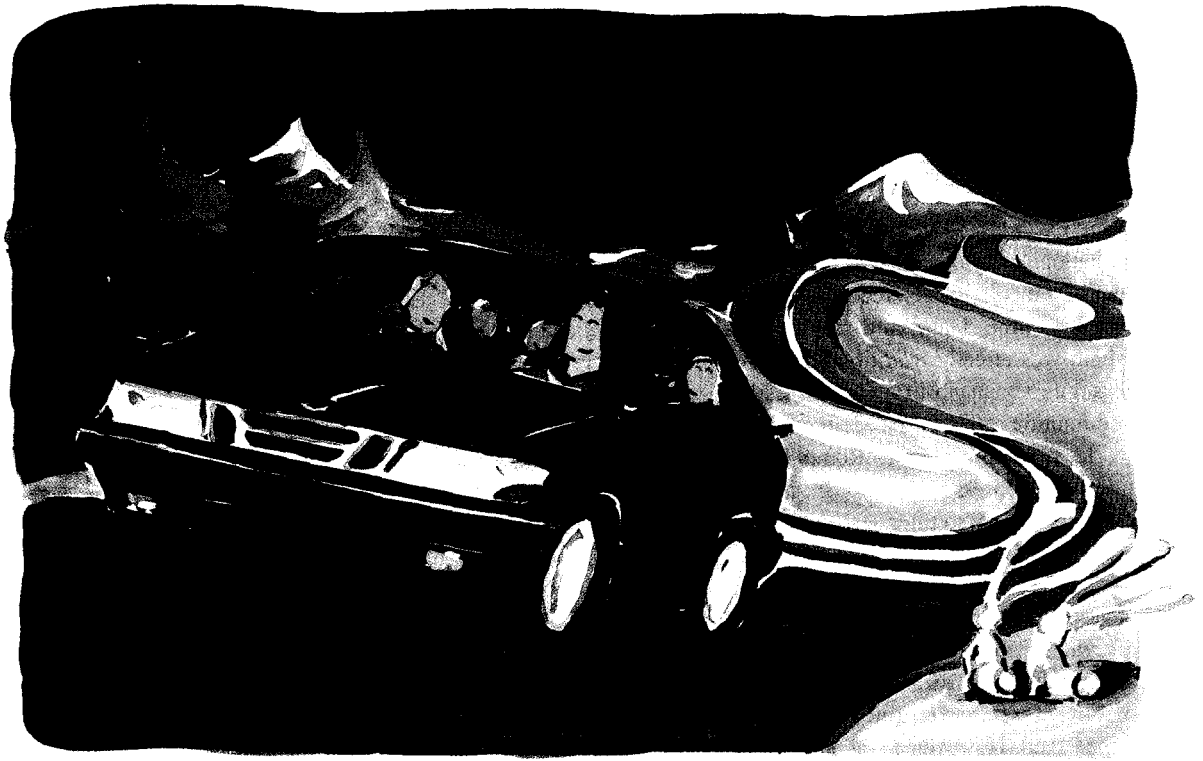
In Matthew, Jesus announces that He will be in the tomb for three days because Jonah was in the whale for three days, a clear borrowing from the Hebrew Bible. The entry into Jerusalem on a donkey, the casting of lots for the clothing after the Crucifixion, and many other events fall into this category.

The ancient writers did not use footnotes. "As it is written" and "to be fulfilled" were attempts to document their case. They were intended to strengthen the early Christians in the belief that Jesus had fulfilled the prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. Ironically, the very attempt to "prove" the events of the Gospels from the Hebrew Bible shows them to be inventions.

Charlotte Allen provides an excellent summation of modern research on the historical Jesus and the hypothetical document Q.

Paul, however, receives no attention in the article. Although Paul is often accused of being the founder of later Christianity, or of moving the story of Jesus in certain theological directions, he is in actuality our *earliest witness to the life of Jesus*, antedating all the Gospels. In his letters he indicated that he knew a fair amount from the oral tradition about Jesus' life and sayings, such as the account of the Last Supper in I Cor. 11 and of the Resurrection in I Cor. 15. This material was transmitted orally according to ancient custom, and the oral transmission forms a historical bridge between Jesus and those who wrote about him thirty to sixty years later.

Arthur Freeman
Moravian Theological Seminary
Bethlehem, Pa.



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Charlotte Allen replies:

John Updike and Arthur Freeman upbraid me for neglecting the New Testament letters of Paul, which indeed are the oldest Christian documents in existence—at least as old as the hypothetical primal stratum of the hypothetical Q. Furthermore, as Mr. Updike correctly points out, Paul's letters, written roughly from A.D. 50 to 64, reflect "a cosmic incarnational theology already in place"—that is, a theology centered in Jesus' life story, atoning death, and resurrection which was already *traditional* (as Professor Freeman observes) in Christian communities all over the Mediterranean world, from Jerusalem to Rome, by the time Paul addressed the subject, a mere twenty years or so after Jesus' crucifixion. That it was traditional we don't have to guess at, either, because Paul made it clear that he and his readers had heard it elsewhere from others. Had my article attempted a reconstruction of Christian origins, I would certainly have mentioned Paul. However, I was merely examining a scholarly phenomenon: how it is possible to "reconstruct" a document that may not have existed and then claim that its "theology" is earlier and probably truer to Jesus than any early Christian document actually in existence.

Magic Time

Michael Davitt Bell's "Magic Time" (December *Atlantic*) brought out beautifully the distinction made in some cancer circles between a "healing" and a "cure." Although a healing of the emotions and the spirit can include a physical cure and a cancer remission can create the kind of happiness that Bell talks about, healings and cures do not always occur simultaneously.

Like Bell, I have suffered for several years from a sarcoma and have been given little hope by my oncologist for a long life. I have explored several areas of holistic medicine, including a nutritional program, a Japanese form of energy work, and some intense psychotherapy. While my cancer has continued to grow, I, like Bell, have experienced a change in attitude from numbness and depression to a sense of happiness and acceptance. I have found, as he has, that being open with family and friends

(which for me includes accepting help from them) is an essential part of learning to tell one's own story. In describing my situation and observing my own and others' reaction to it, I learn more about who I am. I have learned that I have more courage than I thought I did and more love for the people around me. In "breaching the wall" of etiquette or denial, I have found that what I have to say generally includes truths for which people, once they have gotten over the shock of them, are grateful. I have found a new purpose and meaning in battling my disease and an increased sense of self worth which makes it possible for me to accept the inevitability of death.

I do differ with Bell in one area, however. I do not choose to believe in time lines set down by doctors—time lines based on the experiences of other people. I have enough confidence in the mind-body connection to feel that life can be extended or shortened by a person's attitude. I don't believe that my disease is my fault or that if I die it will be because I didn't try hard enough, but I do believe that my mind and spirit will have an effect on the length and quality of my life. My religious beliefs include the thought that God has a plan for each of us and a potential lifeline for each of us. As I thankfully relax in my newfound joy in life, I relax also in the confidence that I will be given the strength to cope either with whatever life brings or with death.

Caroline Stephens
Longmont, Colo.

"Magic Time" is a masterpiece of wisdom. No "poor me"—merely a pragmatic look at the process that awaits. Michael Davitt Bell has truly given us all a gift of grace, courage, and wisdom.

John E. Moren
Davis, Calif.

Immigration

David M. Kennedy's article "Can We Still Afford to Be a Nation of Immigrants?" (November *Atlantic*) supports his position well on the historical facts. However, it neglects a few key contemporary political points.

The *reconquista* Kennedy discusses in his conclusion missed perhaps the most important aspect of the visible takeover

of the southwestern United States. *Ramparts* magazine wrote that the Southwest is being taken over by the Ford Foundation (primarily) in dollars, not by U.S. military force. The National Council of La Raza, the Mexican-American Legal and Defense Education Fund (funded significantly through Ford), and the Citizenship U.S.A. program make it much more difficult for today's immigrants to assimilate into the predominantly Anglo-Saxon American culture. For example, these organizations have fought hard for funding for bilingual education and against teacher testing, and in California made sure that funds appropriated for bilingual education were not included in Proposition 98's funding equation, ensuring that Latino students would have more difficulty acquiring English, which for the most part is not spoken at home. This is so because school districts have a significant financial incentive to keep bilingual students enrolled in this program.

These organizations, through funding from Ford and the federal government (each organization receives a third of its funding from the federal government), fight with all their political power to assure themselves a part of the post-civil-rights pie of victimization, regardless of actual discrimination. They strive to foster a sense of Hispanic identity first and an American identity as an afterthought. It is no wonder that citizens of southwestern states feel compelled to pass official-English laws and initiatives similar to California's Proposition 187.

The real question is this: Can we continue to permit immigration, given the current political substructure influencing immigration and other policies (other ethnic groups have begun to follow the Latino model)? At present the answer is no. We are already pursuing a course of Balkanization (especially on university campuses) that is extremely dangerous. The highest-rated newscast in the Los Angeles market is on KMEX-34, Univision, a Spanish-speaking TV station. Thus the present does not echo the past even in the slightest.

Jason Bryce Rush
Fullerton, Calif.

In reviewing the costs and benefits of immigration, both David M. Kennedy and George J. Borjas ("The New Economics of Immigration," November *At-*

lantic) fail to mention the environmental costs of immigration-generated population growth. What accounting is being made for the loss of biodiversity, destruction of forests, and exploitation of our rivers and lakes to provide energy, housing, and food for our growing population? This question may make us uncomfortable, but how can it be said that we will be better off ignoring than confronting it?

Mark W. Nowak
Negative Population Growth
 Washington, D.C.

George J. Borjas's method for estimating the economic effects of immigration is insightful and important. It reveals that immigration creates both an "immigration surplus," which benefits primarily employers, and a "redistribution of wealth" to the detriment of those who depend for their living on wages. Depressed wages, which underlie both effects, are caused by growth in the labor force: more workers must compete in a relatively slow-growing job market.

Borjas makes a crucial decision in accepting the estimate that "a 10 percent increase in the number of workers lowers wages by about three percent." I am aware of such findings. Claudia Goldin, of Harvard, uses data from immigration and labor markets in the rapidly industrializing U.S. economy of 1880-1920.

The effects of a growing labor force may be magnified in economies that are developing less dramatically (creating fewer jobs) than the United States was at that period in its history. For example, studies of pre-industrial England, by the historical demographer Ronald D. Lee, of the University of California at Berkeley, show that a 10 percent increase in population depressed wages by 22 percent. That is, Borjas cites a three percent wage decline; Lee estimates 22 percent. The present effect is probably somewhere between.

Lee's data span several generations. In contrast, the United States is experiencing a 10 percent increase in population every nine or ten years. Direct immigration plus the children born to post-1970 immigrants accounts for 60 percent of that very rapid increase. Population growth quickly translates into labor-force growth.

Thus it is easy to conclude that the

"immigration surplus" for employers is larger, and the redistribution of wealth away from Americans who work for wages is greater, than Borjas estimates. Moreover, Borjas appears to underestimate the public-sector costs of immigration. Taken together, these effects suggest that the immigration of low-skill people (who make up more than 90 percent of the stream under "family reunification" policy) is a serious net drain on the economy and also counterproductive in terms of the long-standing social policies for giving opportunity to least-advantaged Americans and strengthening the working middle class.

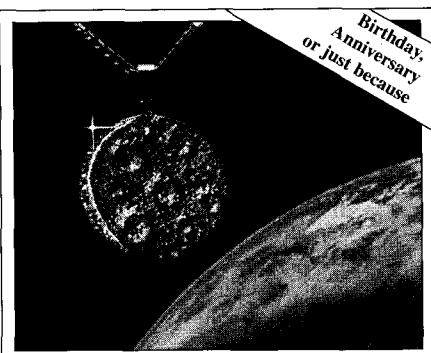
Virginia Abernethy
Editor, Population and Environment
 Nashville, Tenn.

Neither Kennedy nor Borjas mentions the environmental and social consequences of today's immigration policy, under which our nation will not only experience the strains that Kennedy sees but will double in size in less than a century, and still be growing. A third essay by a demographer-environmentalist would have deepened the analysis, and the alarm, by more than a third.

Otis L. Graham Jr.
University of North Carolina
 Wilmington, N.C.

I am writing to correct an error in the article by George J. Borjas. He states that whereas Canada allows would-be immigrants to "buy" visas by investing \$250,000 in Canadian businesses, the United States has not taken such an approach. This is untrue. Since 1991 the United States has set aside 10,000 visas each year for those immigrants willing to invest a million dollars in an American business and employ ten American workers. The figure is lowered to \$500,000 for certain "targeted employment areas"—that is, rural areas that at the time of investment have unemployment rates at least 150 percent of the national average. The investors are admitted as permanent residents on a conditional basis for two years. If during this two-year period the investors fail to live up to the requirements of their "alien entrepreneur" visas, they face deportation proceedings.

Cheri Attix
 San Diego, Calif.



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David Kennedy's comparison of the potential future of the American Southwest to what has happened in Quebec is simply silly. Though I would feel a certain amount of dreamy cultural pride if his prediction came to pass, I am certain that it will not. The unique nature of the situation that he accurately identifies—namely, geographic proximity to Mexico—will produce a very different dynamic. Leaving one's cultural home, whether by a walk across a highway or a trip across an ocean, is no small thing. It is undertaken always with the understanding that you may never see that place again, that you may live your life and be buried in what you once would have considered foreign soil. In the past immigrants' ties to their source culture were stretched over a vast expanse of ocean and eventually and necessarily snapped. The geographic proximity to Mexico makes immigrants' ties to that country stronger, and thus has merely slowed down the assimilative processes that are at work in other immigrant groups from the moment they arrive here. The unrelenting flood of American culture into Mexico will help the process along by preparing potential immigrants beforehand.

I find far more troubling the current disintegration of American culture and its relationship to immigrants. As my family and I have witnessed progressive groups of Mexican immigrants arrive, we've seen them take to gangs, drugs, social-welfare dependency, and general spiritual and moral meltdown, not because that was their intent but because they see it as their best hope for assimilation into the lower strata of American society. The burden that current immigrants might place on the social-welfare system is in large part a byproduct of the existence of such a system in the first place. I have a very hard time believing that if social welfare and easy access to public hospitals and schools had been available at the turn of the century, the immigrants of that era would not have taken advantage of them to the same extent. If anything, the current wave of immigrants has done an unfortunately good job of assimilating into American culture—a culture of dependency, moral and spiritual lassitude, and general apathy toward hard work, education, and community involvement.

The fact is that the cultural argument against immigration is at its core a measure of the increasing weakness of American culture. The problem with immigration today is much less a result of where immigrants come from or what they bring with them than a byproduct of the impoverished cultural produce that is raised locally and that they are merely harvesting.

Luis Fernandez
Columbus, Ohio

David M. Kennedy replies:

Jason Bryce Rush's list of factors impeding the process of Latino assimilation is long, including the Ford Foundation, the Mexican-American Legal and Defense Education Fund, and a Spanish-language TV station (KMEX). That station arrests my attention. Philanthropic efforts to sustain immigrant cultures, or ease their members' transition into American society, are nothing new. Jane Addams's Hull House, in late-nineteenth-century Chicago, for example, was but the most famous of scores of "settlement houses" that undertook just those tasks for European immigrants a century ago. Many of the young social workers in those institutions (including Harry Hopkins, Frances Perkins, and Henry Morgenthau) went on to play conspicuous roles in the New Deal, much of whose historical mission was to usher the large immigrant communities previously on the margins of American life into this society's mainstream. MALDEF also has counterparts in a previous era's ethnic lobbies and urban political machines, organizations that sought simultaneously to hold immigrant communities together and to guide their members into the larger society. Just to the degree they succeeded in the latter aim, they eventually failed at the first, and passed into the history books, as did the settlement houses. But KMEX, I believe, represents something new, as Mr. Rush acknowledges. It testifies to the fact that at least one present-day immigrant community has the mass and the money to sustain a major, and separate, medium of information, entertainment, and advertising. Some scattered, low-powered, limited-range ethnic radio stations flourished evanescently in the 1920s, only to be swamped by the emergence of high-powered transmitters broadcasting into large "mar-

kets." Further developments in technology, and the same commercial logic, now serve KMEX. KMEX demonstrates once again that because of the size and cultural coherence of the Latino community, the gods of commerce may have more to do with its ultimate destiny than all the foundations and political operatives in the land—and those gods are largely indifferent on the question of assimilation.

As for the demographic and environmental implications of immigration, I can only repeat that from a global perspective migration to higher-productivity employments may well be among the strongest incentives to lower fertility, and that I am highly skeptical of the argument that immigration is a major cause of environmental degradation.

Finally, though Luis Fernandez may find my comparison of the present-day American Southwest with Quebec "silly," I must say that I find his contribution literally incredible. Are we really to believe from it that the children of earlier immigrants did not attend school? That today's immigrants embrace "gangs, drugs, social-welfare dependency, and general spiritual and moral meltdown" as techniques of assimilation? That not the prospect of economic opportunity but the lure of "lassitude" and degeneracy on a scale equivalent to Sodom and Gomorrah is what really drives immigration? Mr. Fernandez is clearly unhappy with contemporary American culture, but I submit that he's got it all wrong: America's continuing attractiveness to newcomers ranks among the healthiest indexes of this society's vitality.

George Borjas replies:

Although Cheri Attix accuses me of erroneously stating that the United States does not set aside visas for "investors," my conscience is clear. Although I refer in my article to the availability of investor visas in Canada, I do not make any statement whatsoever about the presence or absence of such visas in the United States. I am well aware of the existence of the U.S. program. Nevertheless, as Ms. Attix must realize, the 10,000 visas available to investors are but a tiny fraction of the total number of visas handed out annually. And that is why my article stresses the family-reunification

aspect of current policy—which is clearly responsible for the bulk of entrants.

Most of the other reactions from readers stress costs of immigration that neither my article nor David Kennedy's stressed, such as the impact on the environment and on our cultural and political values. These questions are important and worth discussing. Unfortunately, we simply do not know as much about these effects as we do about the easier-to-measure economic effects.

Advice & Consent

Readers of "My Grandfather's Last Tale" (December *Atlantic*), about the late composer Ernst Toch, may have become infected, like me, with haplessly futile curiosity regarding precisely where it was that Toch spent his all-important stint on the Austro-Italian front during the First World War. In her taped oral history, completed just weeks before her death in 1972, my grandmother Lilly went to great lengths to enunciate the name of the place clear-

ly, since she was the last person alive who knew it. "Hot Potato Shit," she intoned authoritatively. And not then, nor ever in the years since, despite hours and hours spent combing dozens of atlases and gazetteers, have I been able to determine where the hell she was talking about.

My nights of sleepless tossing, however, have now miraculously come to an end. One of the article's readers, George Strauss, of Piscataway, New Jersey (originally from Vienna), had the wit to reach for a 1913 Baedeker guidebook to the "Oesterreich Ungarn" region of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, and there, right where it was supposed to be (in the Krain region between Laibach—now known as Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital—and Trieste), he located a village called (or anyway once called, for who knows what it's called nowadays) Hotederschitz. Mr. Strauss makes a convincing case for the confusion in Viennese pronunciation, and I wish to thank him profusely.

Lawrence Wechsler
New York, New York

"The Greatest Show on Earth" (December *Atlantic*), Sheila Gordon's gentle, touching story of a lonely way-station along a limitless stretch of railroad track in South Africa, put warm breath in the people she depicts living in that tiny, isolated hamlet in the middle of nowhere.

It is a haunting tale, beautifully expressed: if "page-turner" can be used for magazines as it is for good books, then *The Atlantic Monthly* clearly deserves this bouquet of flattery for fine fiction.

Robert J. Curcio
Tuolumne, Calif.

Editors' Note

Readers with access to the Internet will find *The Atlantic Monthly* on the Web at www.TheAtlantic.com. This month join Peter Edelman, the author of "The Worst Thing Bill Clinton Has Done," and other experts for an online roundtable on the future of welfare. Readers are invited to participate by posting responses in **The Body Politic**, an online forum hosted jointly by *The Atlantic* and *U.S. News & World Report*.

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THE MARCH ALMANAC

Government

March 27: as of today female circumcision, or female genital mutilation, becomes illegal in the United States, according to measures included in a congressional spending bill last fall. Anyone who performs or arranges for FGM on girls under the age of 18 will be fined, or face up to five years in prison, or both. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 150,000 women and girls in the United States have had FGM performed on them or are at risk. Another of the bill's provisions, which takes effect next September, requires U.S. representatives to international financial institutions to oppose most loans to countries where FGM is common unless those countries have instituted educational programs aimed at eradicating the practice.



The Skies

March 14: the first-quarter Moon sits close to the red star Aldebaran, in the constellation Taurus, in the southwestern sky after sundown. **17:** Mars reaches opposition—it is on the far side of Earth from the Sun—and so is in the sky all night long. **20:** at 8:57 A.M. EST the Vernal Equinox occurs. **22:** Comet Hale-Bopp is expected to make its closest approach to Earth today—although, because of interference from the Moon, the month's best evening viewing will not begin until the 25th. The best predawn viewing occurs early in the month. **23:** Full Moon, also known this month as the Chaste, Sap, and Awakening Moon. A partial lunar eclipse, reaching its maximum at about 11:40 P.M. EST, is visible across much of the country tonight.



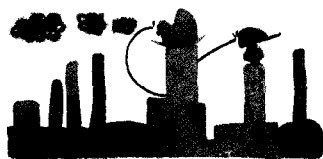
Q&A

Does chicken soup—a folk remedy in countries from Italy and Greece to Vietnam and China—really help to cure a cold?

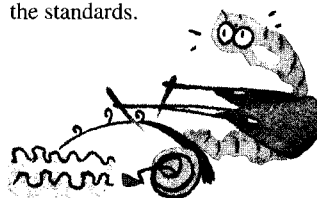
It appears to, according to a study conducted at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach. Researchers compared the effects of chicken soup and other liquids on "nasal mucus velocity" and found, for reasons they could not determine, that chicken soup increases the flow of mucus, thereby shortening the time that germs are in the body. Another researcher has theorized that this effect is partly due to the amino acid cysteine, which is found in chicken skin and feathers and which he postulates is released from the skin when chicken soup is heated. Cysteine is chemically very similar to the drug acetylcysteine, a mucus-loosening agent commonly prescribed for patients with bronchitis and other respiratory disorders. It is also an antioxidant, and may have a protective effect on the delicate tissues of the lungs.

Environment

This month the Environmental Protection Agency is scheduled to propose a rule that would require certain states to revise their emission-reduction plans in an effort to address the movement of ozone pollution, or smog, from one state to another. "Ozone transport," which results when emissions from industrial areas are carried long distances downwind, is a particular problem for



the Northeast, where some states have been unable to attain ozone levels in compliance with 1990 amendments to the Clean Air Act despite having reduced local emissions. The new rule will be based on recommendations from the Ozone Transport Assessment Group, which includes representatives of various industry and environmental groups from the 37 easternmost states; it is likely to become final next summer. Opposition to the rule is expected from states, especially in the Midwest and South, that meet current standards for ozone levels but may have to adopt stricter controls to help other states meet the standards.

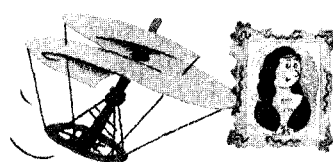


Expiring Patent

No. 4,014,126. Slingshot-Action Fishing Rod. "A slingshot casting attachment for a fishing rod comprising a frame attachable to the rod, a sling with which a fishing [lure] is engageable, [and] a sling coupling receiving the ends of the sling and mounted in the frame to lie close alongside the rod, such coupling movable to a raised position disposing the sling operatively."

Arts & Letters

March 3: "Leonardo da Vinci: Scientist, Inventor, Artist"—the most comprehensive exhibit ever assembled on Leonardo—comes to its only American venue, Boston's Museum of Science. It will include more than 200 original and facsimile drawings; some 25 large-scale models of Leonardo's proposed inventions, such as a flying machine and a prototype of a tank; replicas of his plans for bridges, forts, canal systems, weapons and defense systems, and towns; and numerous hands-



on displays. Museumgoers can, among other things, draw while looking through "Leonardo's window," an eyepiece designed to enhance perspective; manipulate the flow and movement of water, one of Leonardo's most enduring interests; and watch dissections of various animal organs (Leonardo performed numerous dissections of human corpses as a basis for his famous anatomical drawings). The exhibit, which originated in Sweden, will be in Boston through September 1.

50 Years Ago

J. B. Priestley, writing in the March, 1947, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* on the occasion of W. C. Fields's death: "Nobody could suggest the malice of objects better than Fields. At his best moments, an ordinary room, empty of other human beings, could turn itself into a mined mountain pass. He could start a bitter feud with two chairs and a sideboard. . . his departure, perhaps for his real home, where the furniture is quiet and kind and all things behave properly, is a sad loss to America, which could better spare whole rows of hard-faced rich men, glad-handing politicians, obedient editors, and raucous commentators than it could this one rebellious clown. For it is here, among these bitter or uproarious drolls, slapping the custard pie on the faces of solemn prominent citizens, refusing to sign on the dotted line, that American life stays healthy, ripe, still crammed with promise."





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And Now for the News

*The disturbing freshness of Gibbon's
Decline and Fall*

RECENTLY, in the course of packing books away for storage, I came across an old friend—Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. I decided to hold out three of the six volumes for yet another reading. As when I had read the *Decline and Fall* previously, I was deliciously overwhelmed. If I could have one voice in my ear as I traveled through the Third World, with its innumerable rebellions and migrations; through Europe, as nationalism impedes unification; or through the United States, as it tries to reconstitute itself for a transnational age, the voice would be Gibbon's, with its sly wit, biting irony, and fearless realism about an event that "is still felt by the nations of the earth." The collapse of Rome left in its wake the tribal configurations from which modern European states emerged, and I can think of no work that offers a shrewder historical perspective on today's foreign and domestic news than the three volumes of the *Decline and Fall* that cover Rome from its territorial zenith, in the early second century A.D., under Trajan (the first and last Roman general to navigate the Persian Gulf), to the dissolution of the western half of the empire, in A.D. 476.

Those three volumes, published from 1776 to 1781—the years of the American Revolution—offer, of course, more than the story of Rome's decline. Among other things, they constitute a general theory of history, a controversial interpretation of the birth of Christianity, an extended essay on military elites and the fickleness of public opinion, and an unequaled geographical and cultural primer on Europe, the



by Robert D. Kaplan

Middle East, and Asia. Beyond all else, though, the *Decline and Fall* is a page-turning narrative, driven by the most pointed of character sketches and anecdotes, without which, regardless of its other strengths, Gibbon's work would never have survived. Of the younger Gordian, who ruled Rome for little more than a month in A.D. 237, Gibbon wrote: "Twenty-two acknowledged concubines, and a library of sixty-two thousand volumes, attested the variety of his inclinations, and from the productions which he left behind him, it appears that

the former as well as the latter were designed for use rather than ostentation." Following that is a footnote, in which Gibbon added, "By each of his concubines, the younger Gordian left three or four children. His literary productions were by no means contemptible."

Gibbon's Rome from the second through the fifth centuries offers a rich and riveting tableau of coups, counter-coups, wicked savagery, ethnic and regional upheavals, and attempts at reform that either failed or, sometimes worse, succeeded, the success creating new problems that furthered Rome's decline—as though an empire (or any large state) were a living organism "subject to decay," as Polybius would have it, from "its own internal evolution," good or bad.

The *Decline and Fall* instructs that human nature never changes, and that mankind's predilection for faction, augmented by environmental and cultural differences, is what determines history. In this Gibbon was influenced by the Baron de Montesquieu, who saw history not as mere politics and ideas

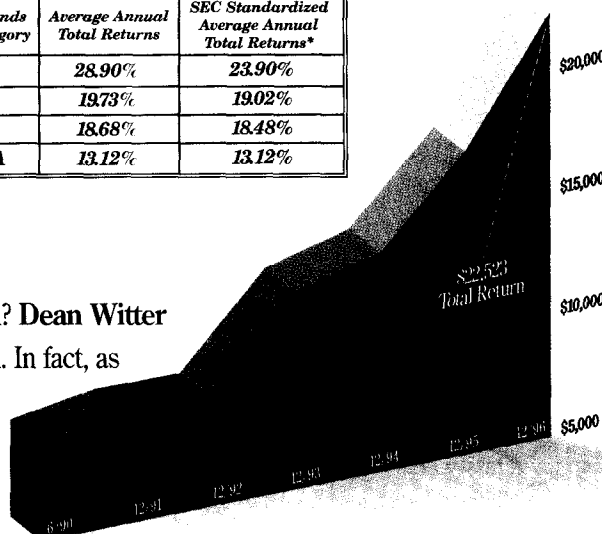
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*SEC standardized returns assume you sold your shares at the end of each reporting period. A sales charge, which applies only if the shares were sold within six years of the purchase, is reflected in these returns. Investment return and principal will fluctuate so that your shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original purchase price. Past performance is no guarantee of future results.

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but as a complex of cultural, social, and climatic forces. The brilliance of the *Decline and Fall* lies in Gibbon's ability to build a narrative out of individual agency and the surprises of history—such as the empire's restoration in the third century under the able rule of Claudius, Aurelian, Probus, and Diocletian—even as the sheer accumulation and repetition of events over centuries ultimately robs many an effective emperor (each with a distinct personality early in the story) of his identity in the reader's mind, and as the initially successful restoration flows into the larger movement of decline. Only patterns, rather than individuals, endure at the end of the three volumes.

For Gibbon the real changes were not so much the dramatic, “newsworthy” events as the insidious transformations: Rome moving from democracy to the trappings of democracy to military rule; Milan in Italy and Nicomedia in Asia Minor functioning as capital cities decades before the formal division of the empire into western and eastern halves, and almost two centuries before Rome officially ceased to be an imperial capital; the fact that the first fifteen “Christian” bishops of Jerusalem were circumcised Jews subscribing to a not yet formalized religion. It seems that the more gradual and hidden the change, the more historically important it turned out to be.

■ ■ ■

The similarities between Gibbon's Rome and the United States will be obvious to any reader—they are two multi-ethnic polities founded on patriotic virtue, unified by gigantic highway systems, their middle classes occupying crassly uniform dwellings, and so forth—but the *Decline and Fall* evokes other contemporary realities. Gibbon's catalogue of ancient authoritarian regimes also depicts places like Nigeria, Pakistan, Serbia, Nicolae Ceaușescu's Romania, and mid-twentieth-century Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union—without, of course, the mass organization and mass murder allowed for by industrialization. It was the peripatetic Emperor Caracalla, in the early third century, Gibbon tells us—not Hitler or Stalin or even Attila the Hun—who was the world's first worldwide tyrant. And when Gibbon wrote about the Crimean Chersonites, who, helped by the Romans, attacked the Goths in A.D. 335, he captured well the nearby Caucasus, where the Russians now pit one assemblage of clans against another. The *Decline and Fall* teaches that the tragedy for so much of the world is how, despite technological advancement, various societies are still in a political sense ancient; and how, despite the Enlightenment, many governments—including ours—remain corrupt and decadent because of the influence of money.

Gibbon's writing sets a standard for literary bravery. He sought no one's approval and was afraid of nothing. In his day the Church was a sacred cow; he was merciless in his exposition of its evolution. According to Gibbon, Christianity—to use the words of the historian Hugh Trevor-Roper in his introduction to the *Decline and Fall*—emerged from a “heretical Jewish sect” to become a “novel cult of virginity” and the most “persistent of the competing new Oriental superstitions,” eventually to capture power as a “revolutionary ideology.”

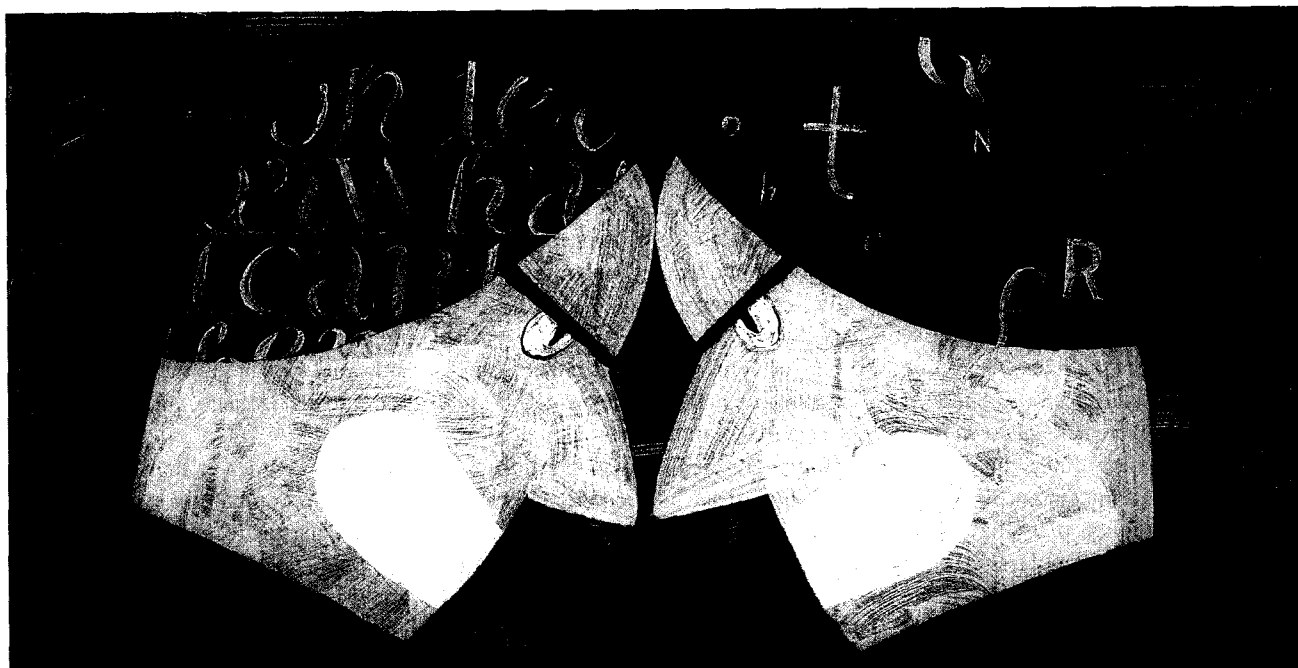
Concerning the persecutions of the Christians, Gibbon concluded, after exhaustive documentation,

Even admitting, without hesitation or inquiry, all that history has recorded, or devotion has feigned, on the subject of martyrdoms, it must still be acknowledged that the Christians, in the course of their intestine dissensions, have inflicted far greater severities on each other than they had experienced from the zeal of infidels.

Not surprisingly, the publication of the *Decline and Fall* met with bitter controversy. Though the book was praised by the philosopher David Hume and others, attacks on Gibbon for his treatment of the Church were widespread and sustained: almost sixty denunciatory books about him were published in his lifetime. Bad reviews forced Gibbon to write a vindication of his first volume in 1779; he did it brilliantly. Attempts to undermine the *Decline and Fall* continued.

Rather than the embodiment of amoral despair, Gibbon revealed himself as the very flower of Enlightenment rationalism. He was a conservative along the lines of his contemporary Edmund Burke, who saw humankind's best hope in moderate politics and elastic institutions that do not become overbearing. Only rarely did imperial Rome or early Christianity display the necessary traits. Gibbon, like Burke, was shocked by the French Revolution. His Rome had also known violent mobs screaming noble platitudes in order to remove a tyrannical ruler, only to see another one set in his place. Gibbon's certainty that the tendency toward strife is a natural consequence of the human condition—a natural consequence of the very variety of our racial, cultural, and economic experience, which no belief system, religious or otherwise, can overcome—is reminiscent of James Madison in *The Federalist*. Madison, too, was convinced that a state or an empire can endure only if it generally limits itself to adjudicating disputes among its peoples, and in so doing becomes an exemplar of patriotic virtue.

To dip into the *Decline and Fall* is to know what not only writing but also reading used to be like. Gibbon's elliptical elegance is rare in an age when a surfeit of information, coupled with the distractions of electronic communication, forces writers to move briskly from one point to another. Rare, too, in an age of tedious academic specialty are Gibbon's sweeping yet valuable generalizations. When Gibbon describes everyday people in poor nations as exhibiting a “carelessness of futurity,” he exposes one tragic effect of underdevelopment in a way that many more-careful and polite tomes of today do not. Our academic clerisy, I'm sure, could point out factual inadequacies, along with examples of cultural bias, throughout the *Decline and Fall*. Yet nothing on the shelves today will give readers as awe-inspiring a sense of spectacle as the *Decline and Fall*: of how onrushing events almost everywhere—Europe, Africa, the Near East, Asia—so seamlessly weave together. At a time of sound bites on one hand and 500-page yawns about a single issue on the other, here, blessedly, is something for the general reader. ☞



A War That Never Ends

The laws of grammar may be arbitrary, as those who would simply dismiss them assert. But arbitrary laws are just the ones that need enforcement

FOURTEEN years ago Geoffrey Nunberg, a professor of linguistics at Stanford, published in this magazine a piece called "The Decline of Grammar," which dealt with the conflict between the judgmental and nonjudgmental approaches to questions of correctness in language usage—the war between the prescriptivists and the descriptivists. His article drew one of the greatest volumes of reader response that the editors of *The Atlantic Monthly* had seen in years. Most of the other burning public issues of fourteen years ago have receded: we are not now much concerned about the possibility of nuclear war, or a Russian attack on Western Eu-

by Mark Halpern

rope, or the insidious effect of inflation in undermining the economy. But the fierce interest in language usage remains as strong as ever. The most recent evidence of its perennial fascination for us is the range of reaction accorded last year's appearance of a revised edition of H. W. Fowler's lucid and elegant guidebook *Modern English Usage*. But even more revealing of the eternal nature of the usage war is another book, published two years ago: Steven Pinker's *The Language Instinct*, which deserves to be looked at in some detail.

Pinker picks up where Nunberg left off—indeed, he picks up well before Nunberg left off, duplicating many of

the latter's arguments and analogies, and making the same errors in defending the descriptivist position. If I treat the two men here as interchangeable, almost as a two-headed monster, it's partly because they are indeed as one in their outlook on the relevant issues, and partly because my quarrel is really with neither man but rather with the philosophical position they share—not only with each other but with virtually all academic students of linguistics.

Nunberg made the two classic objections to prescriptivism. The first is the scientific objection: laws of nature are involved here, and those trying to influence linguistic events without knowledge of linguistic laws are simply demonstrating their ignorance and making fools of themselves. Nunberg likened them to landscape gardeners trying to stop or modify the processes of plate tectonics. But if the "frantic efforts" of the gardeners "to keep Alaska from bumping into Asia" are ridiculous, is it not equally silly for geologists to tell landscape gardeners that they must not presume to pollard a lime tree, or put in a fishpond, without deferring to the experts on plate tectonics?

The second is the egalitarian objection: the prescriptivists are attempting to foist their own linguistic practices, which are usually the practices of the ed-

educated, affluent, fortunate members of society, on the less educated and affluent members.

One of the points that Nunberg, like all of his school, was most eager to make is that the “rules” of grammar, and of good usage generally, have no scientific basis; they are just someone’s idea of what is proper, and that idea changes from generation to generation. The descriptivists are so eager, indeed, to make sure this point has registered that they seldom stop making it long enough to hear the reply: “Yes, we know this; we do not contend that the rules we propose for the sake of clarity and richness of communication were handed down from on high. They are ordinary man-made rules, not divine commandments or scientific laws (although many have support from historical scholarship), and we agree that they, like all man-made things, will need continual review and revision. But these facts are no more arguments against laws governing language usage than they are against laws governing vehicular traffic. Arbitrary laws—conventions—are just the ones that need enforcement, not the natural laws. The law of gravity can take care of itself; the law that you go on green and stop on red needs all the help it can get.”

If one had to select a single sentence of Nunberg’s to serve as a précis of his article, it would be this: “But it is impossible to talk intelligently about the language nowadays without having an idea of what the program of modern linguistics is all about. . . .” This key statement is false. What linguistic scientists have been doing in this century, regardless of the value it may have for other purposes, has absolutely no relevance to the constellation of literary-philosophical-social-moral issues that we are talking about when we discuss usage. Nunberg

himself confirms my point: he gives reasons throughout the article for his specific judgments in matters of usage, and nowhere are the findings of linguistic science among them.

Descriptive grammarians suppose that language is an entity with its own laws of development, or natural destiny, and that prescriptive grammarians are trying to interfere with the course of that natural destiny. Nunberg objects to the prescriptivist approach on two grounds: it is futile, since language will follow its natural destiny despite all the efforts of the prescriptivists; and it is somehow wrong—immoral? unethical?—to try to interfere, even though the attempt must be futile. But neither Nunberg nor any other linguist has offered any evidence for either of these points.

An acorn, left to itself, becomes an oak, and a geneticist altering its DNA to make it grow into an elm, or a fish, may justly be said to have interfered with its natural course. But what does language, undisturbed, become? What course do we know it would take if only outsiders would cease to meddle with it? No one has ever shown that language has such a natural course, let alone that there would be anything wrong, if such a course did exist, in altering it.

Of the many attempts that have been made to regulate language usage one way or another, some have succeeded and some have failed. Are we to take it on faith that the ones that succeeded were somehow in accordance with language’s inherent nature, and the others were somehow not? Nunberg and his allies have no scientific standing in their quarrel with “pop grammarians” like John Simon and William Safire; if they disagree with such prescriptivists, they do so not as scientists observing from above the fray, distinguished by superior knowledge and disinterestedness, but simply as fellow gladiators down in the arena—passionate and opinionated, like their adversaries. How the battle will turn out, how it *should* turn out, no one can say with any authority; and since there is no natural course with which to interfere, “interferences” are simply what linguistic scientists call those events of linguistic history that they cannot accept.

Nunberg and his allies have not absorbed Edmund Burke’s dictum: Art is Man’s Nature. The nature under investi-

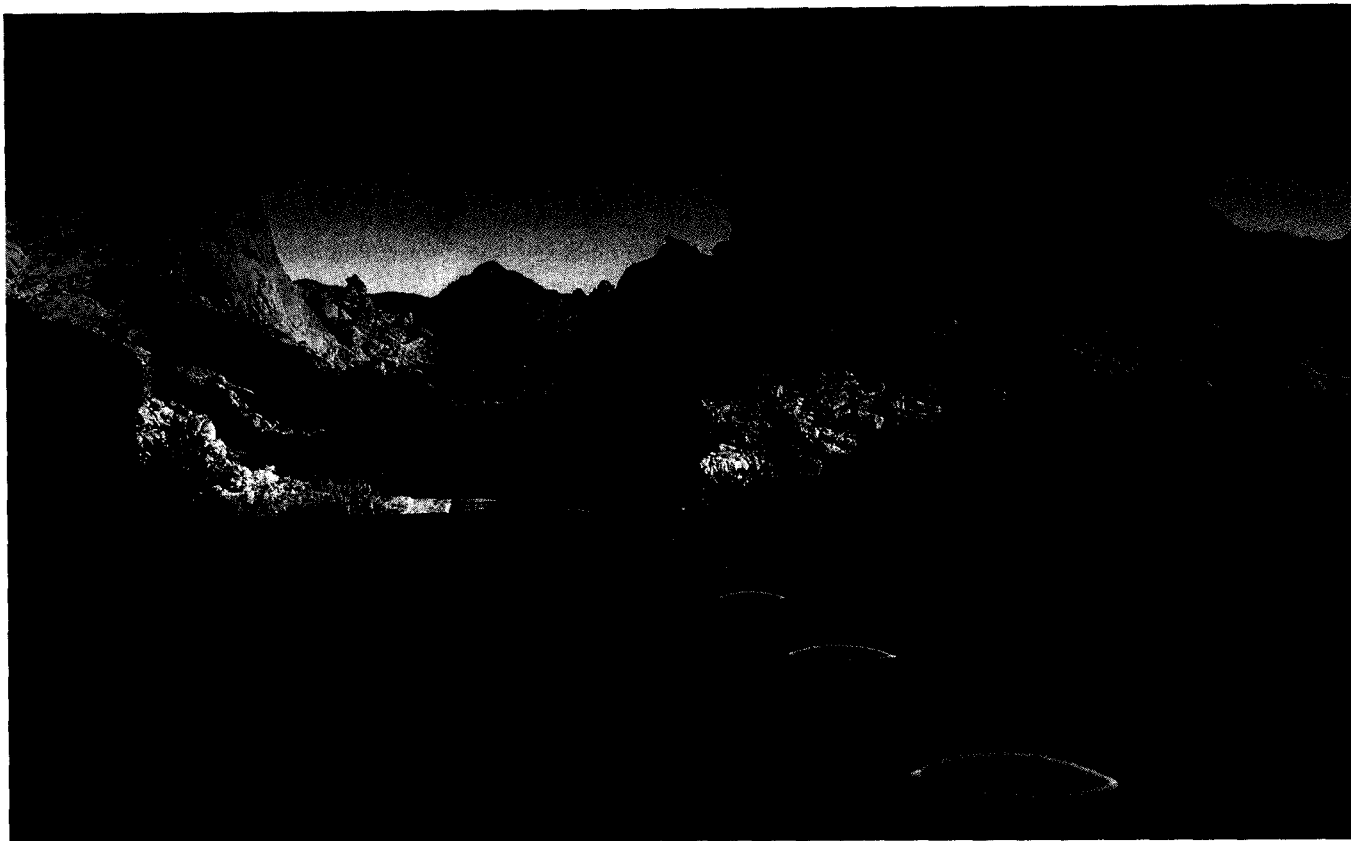
A desire to construct standards is an essential element of human nature—not an aberration.

gation by linguistic science is man’s nature, of which a desire to construct standards, and use them to correct practice, is an essential element, not an aberration.

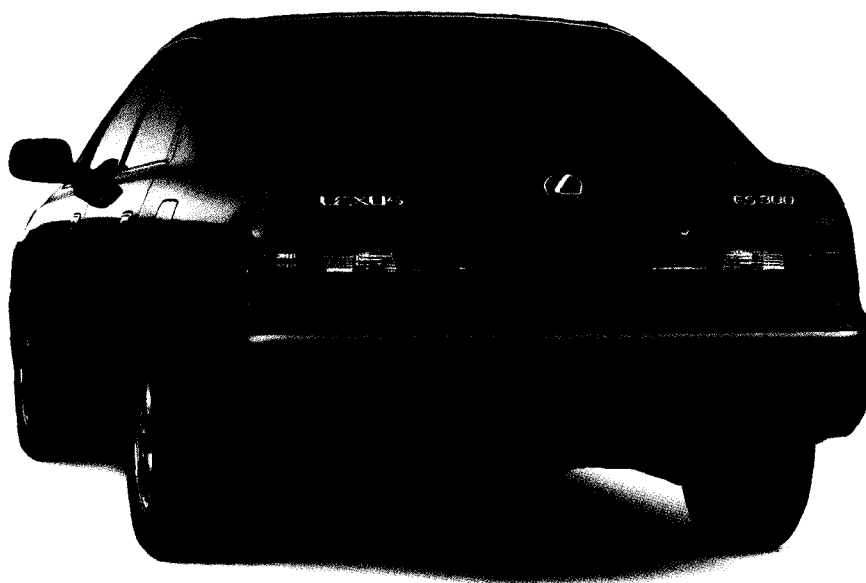
As noted earlier, a more recent salvo in the bombardment of the amateurs by the professionals came from Steven Pinker, who is a professor of psychology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the director of its Center for Cognitive Neuroscience. The novelty and main value of his book lie in his weaving together the recent findings of brain researchers, geneticists, and developmental psychologists to formulate an admittedly primitive but suggestive picture of how human beings learn to speak. It includes a presentation of the work of Noam Chomsky that is the clearest I have yet seen; a balanced and sober analysis of the efforts over the past decade or two to get chimpanzees and gorillas to use language as human beings do; and an interesting attempt to show that the development of language can be accounted for by standard Darwinian natural selection, despite Chomsky’s doubts.

But in the twelfth of his thirteen chapters, “The Language Mavens,” Pinker takes a little holiday from science and attempts to show how ridiculous the majority of nonlinguist writers on language are. Most of the chapter is devoted to analyses by Pinker of specific usage arguments offered by the “mavens.” These are sometimes attributed to a specific maven (usually Safire), sometimes to unnamed “defenders of the standard” (unlike Nunberg, Pinker nowhere mentions Fowler). In most of these encounters Pinker comes out ahead. He wins partly because he has carefully chosen the battles he fights, having had little trouble finding cases in which various mavens have taken indefensible positions, and partly because he has chosen antique bat-

*Would language
take some natural
course, if only
outsiders would cease
to meddle with it?*



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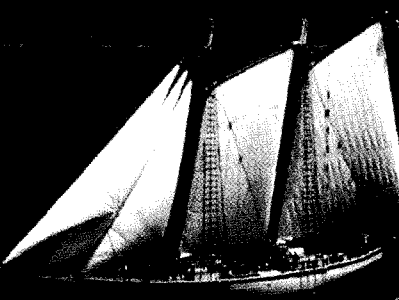
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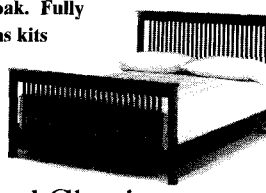
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tles—is anyone still worrying about “ain’t,” or the splitting of infinitives? But the chief reason for his triumphs is that many of the mavens make the fatal mistake of trying to justify their literary-philosophical-social-moral views with historical facts, or supposed facts, about the development of the language—in short, with citations and arguments about which the professional linguist will usually be better informed, or at least able to sound more authoritative. (To see what really expert mavens can do in applying their rule-based expertise to clearing up bad prose, get hold of a copy of *The Reader Over Your Shoulder*, by Robert Graves and Alan Hodge—not the modern paperback reprint, with its ruinous cuts, but the original 1943 edition, published by Macmillan. It is one of the three or four books on usage that deserve a place on the same shelf with Fowler.)

The difference between the linguists and the mavens is captured neatly in the dual meaning that “grammar” bears in Pinker’s book. To the descriptivist, “grammar” is usually short for “generative grammar”: the hypothetical mechanism, embodied in the brain, that produces sentences. To call any recorded utterance ungrammatical, given this sense of the term, is to make a strange, almost meaningless statement; it is like criticizing the way the stomach produces digestive juices. To the prescriptivist—and the majority of the educated public—“grammar” means the mechanism, embodied in books and teachers, that decides whether what you’ve said was correctly said, and in this sense the charge of being ungrammatical is one that we often find justified.

Now, Pinker is well aware of the dual meaning of “grammar” and its derivative forms—he spends the first pages of chapter twelve making the distinction I have just summarized. He draws a correct conclusion.

[The descriptive and prescriptive meanings of rules, grammar, and so forth] are completely different things. . . . One can choose to obsess over prescriptive rules, but they have no more to do with human language than the criteria for judging cats at a cat show have to do with mammalian biology.

Pinker provides in his cat-fancier-versus-biologist analogy another argument

that, like Nunberg’s geologists-versus-landscape-gardeners analogy, deserves to be pushed a step beyond where its author leaves it. Cat fanciers clearly have no grounds for telling mammalian biologists how to go about their business. Have the biologists any more grounds for telling the fanciers that this short-hair is too cobby, that Siamese’s points are too dark, and the whole show should be canceled anyway?

Pinker’s phrase “obsess over” does not sound like the language of a scientist, and his statement that rules have nothing to do with language needs qualification (he means that they have nothing to do with those aspects of language he is professionally interested in). Apart from these characteristic stigmata, his statement is unexceptionable. One wonders, though, why Pinker is unable to proceed to the next step in the argument: if the two viewpoints are so radically different, on what grounds does the descriptivist criticize the prescriptivist?

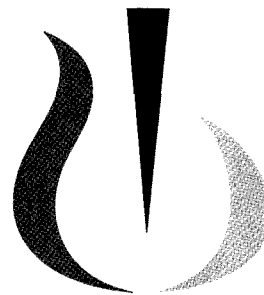
Pinker concludes his campaign against the prescriptivists by quoting a lengthy passage from the preface to Johnson’s *Dictionary*, which he misunderstands as championing the descriptivist position.

Those who have been persuaded to think well of my design, require that it should fix our language, and put a stop to those alterations which time and chance have hitherto been suffered to make in it without opposition. With this consequence I will confess that I have flattered myself for a while; but now begin to fear that I have indulged expectations which neither reason nor experience can justify. . . . Sounds are too volatile and subtle for legal restraints; to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride, unwilling to measure its desires by its strength.

Even if Johnson sadly gave up the hope of fixing the language—faced with what in the same passage he called the world’s “folly, vanity, and affectation”—he did not give up believing in the nobility of the cause. Had Pinker read only a little farther in that preface, he would have found words that no one could misunderstand.

Tongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration; we have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language. ☞

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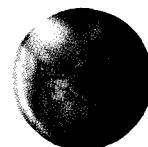
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What's a dad to do in a world of sharp corners?

"HE'LL trip, and that spoon will go right into his throat." My father and I were watching a videotape of my two-year-old nephew, Cameron—one of those that his mother, my sister Laura, regularly sends. As Cameron ran into view with a spoon sticking out of his mouth, I knew exactly what Dad was going to say; I practically mouthed the words along with him. He spoke again as Cameron raced around the coffee table in the next scene: "He's going to split his head open on that table. They should pad the corners."

by **Meg Cimino**

"I know," I replied. "I can't believe that they would even have any furniture. And they should teach him at home to avoid the desk corners and all the other germ-y kids at nursery school."

Dad smiled, as accustomed to my mocking his cautions as I am to hearing his warnings about ubiquitous and mundane hazards. If my father could, he would have all the sharp corners in the world rounded off and padded.

Like most parents, he has always tried to protect his children—me and my six siblings—from all the risks out there.

And as a doctor who specializes in public-health and preventive-medicine issues, he is especially conscious of the harm that can result from the seemingly innocuous as well as the obvious dangers surrounding us.

I remember the surprise I felt as a child making cookies at a friend's house that nobody said a word about the possibility of salmonella poisoning when I stuffed raw cookie dough into my mouth. Gum, candy, any food or beverage, posed a danger of choking, particularly if you moved or talked while chewing. "Are you choking?" was uttered as often around our house as "Did you wash your hands?" The Heimlich maneuver was a highly valued skill.

Restaurants, Dad warned, presented additional risks, such as careless waiters who might drop hot food or coffee on your head and employees who neither covered their faces while sneezing nor washed their hands regularly. If we scoffed, he could cite examples, from his days as the New York City commissioner of health, of roach-infested kitchens that had been shut down.

Fashion, too, could be dangerous. One could break an ankle in high heels, trip over too-long pants and skirts, or catch flowing clothes in windows, doors, or trash compactors. Not so long ago Dad took away my fuzzy bunny slippers to keep me from sliding downstairs. Pocket-books, he advised us, should be worn not across your chest but only over your shoulder. Better that a thief get away with your bag than that he drag you along.

A few years ago Dad confiscated a coat of mine because I hadn't had it hemmed sufficiently. It's a long rust-colored wool coat, and it still hangs in my parents' coat closet. Sometimes I'll ask about it, as I might about an eccentric family member banished to live in the attic. Dad will put the coat on to demonstrate how serious a problem it is. The coat's neck, shoulders, and sleeves will bunch and strain, and its wide circle of a hemline swirl around him like a cape.

"Look—it's too long even on me. And this material is so heavy, it would pull you down."

"I have never heard of anyone injured by too heavy a coat."

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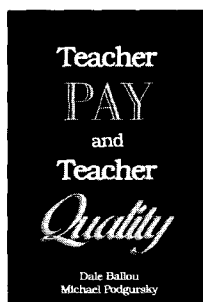
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"Do you want to be the first? Just cut it off here," he'll say, drawing his hand across his knee, "and maybe it should be tapered also."

In clothing Dad values warmth, impermeability, and traction over style. He has a penchant for leather pants ("You'll never feel the wind through these") and any garment made of space-age microfibers. It is always obvious which gifts under the Christmas tree he is responsible for: woolen balaclavas and mittens, battery-heated socks, slippers with treads, and sharp metal cleats to slip over your boots in the snow, which might be indispensable while ice fishing in Alaska but create an embarrassing clatter on the sidewalks of Manhattan, where I live.

The weather was only one of the many natural menaces from which we were to guard ourselves. To this day, when I walk within a few yards of the branches of a tree, I blink as I hear his voice: "Watch your eyes!" Dad lectured us about Rocky Mountain spotted fever from the ticks that lurked in the grass and on neighborhood dogs, deer, and squirrels; about the rabies carried by raccoons, bats, and dogs. "Don't touch—it'll bite!" was his automatic reaction when one of us reached out to an animal. Our own pets—dogs, rabbit, gerbils, snake, and fish—always seemed nervous around my father, aware, I thought, that he regarded them with suspicion.

Of course, as children, we did not always listen to Dad. We had our broken bones, cuts, near chokings, electric shocks, car accidents, and illnesses, some of which might have been avoided (though he never said so) if we had heeded his advice and not jumped from the top of slides, thrown rocks at one another, run around while eating, yanked the plug while the vacuum cleaner was on, driven too fast, and kissed the dogs. My parents for the most part calmly accepted these traumas as a natural part of growing up, perhaps because my father had predicted every one of them.

But there have also been unanticipated calamities: my brother John's meningitis, my disabling head injury, Dad's prostate cancer. He accepted all patiently, protecting us from our fear. He never revealed his own, though he knew well the painful repercussions: special education and a lifetime of medication for

my brother, years of physical therapy for me, surgery and radiation for him. We survived, and these confrontations with our vulnerability left us with some understanding of Dad's desire to control the little that he can.

When my brothers and sisters and I are reminiscing these days, we recall Dad's telling us not to jump on the trampoline in gym class, because of the possibility of spinal injury, and the driving directions he devised so as to minimize the number of left turns. Now we find ourselves uttering similar admonitions. We phone my brother to tell him that we read about someone's dying from the same allergy he has, my sister to tell her about the high lead content of certain mini-blinds or to say that we couldn't sleep last night worrying about that electrical cord we noticed in her house which her kids could reach.

Now Dad has a new generation to guide. His grandchildren have caught on quickly, knowing to wag their fingers and say "That's dangerous!" at the sight of cleaning fluid, and owning helmets before they could skate or bike. At the holiday dinner table three-year-old Margaret tells her two-year-old cousin, "That's too big a bite—you'll choke," while Dad, inspecting the baby's perfect hands, asks, "Does Vincent have a cut on his finger?" As everyone is leaving, we all laugh when my niece bids Dad good-bye: "Be careful, Poppa!"

After a weekend visit to my parents I have my father drop me off at the quiet suburban train station for my trip back to Manhattan. As I wait, I can see his car in the parking lot; I know that he is watching to see that I board safely, without falling into the space between the platform and the train. He waits no matter what the time of day, no matter how many other passengers are waiting with me. Sometimes he parks the car, steps out, and walks up the stairs to the opposite platform. We wave at each other across the tracks. He stands there until the train comes and he sees me board safely and find a seat.

I watch him walk to his car, wanting, as I do more and more often now, to protect him from the world's sharp edges, the way he has always tried to protect us. I wish I could give him the reassurance his worrying and caring gave me. As the train pulls away, I whisper, "Be careful, Dad." ☼

MARCH
1997

Artistic

ENTERTAINMENT
PREVIEW



Popular Music

Genuine

Delta Blues

Jazz

Debbie Harry

on Vocals

Dance

Perfect Working
Partners

Theater

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The Rivals

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Film

BY ELLA TAYLOR

THE SEVENTH ANNUAL ELLA AWARDS

Best English-Language Picture: Mike Leigh's *Secrets and Lies*, which marries sophisticated craft to a funny, lacerating, and great-hearted story of two women—one white, one black—warming to the blood tie between them.

Brenda Blethyn of *Secrets and Lies*

Runners-up: Ron Shelton's *Tin Cup* and Cameron Crowe's *Jerry Maguire*, each a witty and romantic riff on the lunacies of the sporting life; the Coen brothers' *Fargo*, a midwestern spoof as funny as it is chilly; *Shine*, Scott Hicks's playful and touching bio-pic of Australian piano prodigy David Helfgott.

Best Foreign-Language Film: *L'America*, Italian director Gianni Amelio's heart-stopping drama about Albania struggling free of both the legacy of Stalinism and the new brigands of global capitalism.

Runners-up: *The White Balloon*, Jafar Panahi's beautiful contemplation of a small Iranian girl in search of a goldfish; *Chungking Express*, Hong Kong director Wong Kar-Wai's delightfully capricious tripartite tale of modern love; *Prisoner of the Mountains*, Sergei Bodrov's inspiring and entertaining update of a Tolstoy novella.

Best Actor: Jointly to Tony Shalhoub, for his shy charm as the compulsive master chef in Stanley Tucci and Campbell Scott's *Big Night*, and Eddie Murphy, for the sheer elasticity of all seven of his incarnations in *The Nutty Professor*.

Runners-up: Geoffrey Rush, as the hyper-sensitive pianist in *Shine*; Chris Cooper, for his laconic sheriff in *Lone Star*; Ian Hart, as the naive Spanish Civil War freedom fighter in *Land and Freedom*; William H. Macy, as the reluctant perpetrator in *Fargo*; Nick Nolte, as the reluctant Nazi in *Mother Night*.

Stanley Tucci and Tony Shalhoub



Some of the year's best films were recycled oldies (*Vertigo*, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, *Taxi Driver*), while the big studios churned out mediocrities by the dozen, thus clearing the field for small quality movies, both domestic and foreign, to dominate my own private Oscars.

Best Actress: Brenda Blethyn, for the pathos, humor, and serenity with which she inhabited her role as a downtrodden woman in *Secrets and Lies*.

Runners-up: Frances McDormand, for her hilariously dogged policewoman in *Fargo*; Debbie Reynolds, for her loony Gracie Allen composure in Albert Brooks's *Mother*; Laura Dern, as the pathetic drug addict in Alexander Payne's abortion-rights satire, *Citizen Ruth*.

Best Supporting Actor: Timothy Spall, for his versatility as the beleaguered photographer in *Secrets and Lies*.

Runners-up: Jointly to Nathan Lane, as Robin Williams's flaming-queen lover, and Hank Azaria, as the houseboy, in *The Birdcage*; Alan Arkin, for his wry wit as Nick Nolte's neighbor in *Mother Night*; Cheech Marin, as Kevin Costner's long-suffering sidekick in *Tin Cup*; Steve Zahn, as the wannabe womanizer in *That Thing You Do*.



Emily Watson

Best Supporting Actress: Mary Kay Place, for two wonderfully controlled performances—as the kidnapped pseudo-nurse in *Manny and Lo* and the fanatical pro-lifer in *Citizen Ruth*.

Runners-up: Katrin Cartlidge, as Emily Watson's severe but loving sister-in-law in *Breaking the Waves*; Alison Elliot, for her honest turn as a damaged young woman in the otherwise pedestrian *The Spitfire Grill*; Claire Rushbrook, as Brenda Blethyn's truculent daughter in *Secrets and Lies*; Juliet Stevenson, as the obnoxious one in *Emma*.

Best Newcomer: Emily Watson, who brought passion and dignity to an ultimately tacky role as a Scottish whore-saint in Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves*.

Runners-up: Ewan McGregor, as a brilliant dopehead in *Trainspotting*; teenager Iain Robertson, as a lad coming of age in gang-infested Glasgow in *Small Faces*.

In Memoriam: Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski, 1941–1996, whose masterly ten-part cycle, *The Decalogue*, and gorgeous trilogy, *Trois Couleurs*, mused on God in a secular world.

CATEGORIES OF SPECIAL RECOGNITION

The I-Feel-Like-Chicken-Tonight Award goes to Ileana Douglas, for her arm-flapping performance as the Carole King singer in *Grace of My Heart*.

The Calamity Jane Award goes to Franco Zeffirelli, for bowdlerizing *Jane Eyre*, one of the most latently libidinous best-sellers in Western literature, into pap.

The Funny Farmer Award goes to John Schlesinger, for his uproarious adaption of Stella Gibbons's satirical classic, *Cold Comfort Farm*.

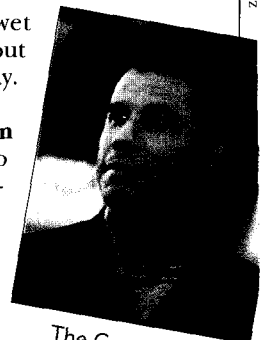
The Mr. Rogers Award goes to Francis Ford Cop-

pola, for *Jack*, his wet blob of a movie about a boy in a man's body.

The Play-It-Again Award goes jointly to *Phenomenon*, the latest in Hollywood's idiot-savant stories to strike it rich at the box office, and *To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday*, another dreary tale of ghost therapy.

The Blow Hard Award goes to Jan De Bont's *Twister*, all craft and no content.

Ella Taylor is a film critic for LA Weekly.



The Great Brain

Popular Music and Jazz

BY BOB BLUMENTHAL AND CHARLES M. YOUNG

BUCKING THE TREND

Most singer-songwriters go about a third as far as they need to for a thorough exploration of their unconscious depths. As a group they've thus developed a reputation for irritating earnestness. From Fresno and a bunch of other places Richard Buckner transcends his peers with a true plunge to the realm where archetypes mix with individual desire, on *Devotion + Doubt* (MCA). In terms of sound it falls somewhere among



Hopelessly devoted to his psyche

folk, progressive country, and rock. The accompaniment is so understated that sometimes it seems to be stating not at all, thus contributing to a mood of pensive mourning over old girlfriends, the wrong choices, and the general overwhelmingness of life for someone who is both intelligent and honest. Buckner's singing has a breathy, exhausted quality that just saps the earnestness right out of you. He's not trying to be sensitive—he is sensitive, and any cuteness of imagery he might have picked up in college has been beaten out of him. This guy's a born poet with a talent for appropriately simple arrangements—in the tradition of Neil Young on his quiet side but with a lower register—so you won't be washing the kitchen floor along with this one. You'll want to listen actively, late at night, and gradually your autobiography will interweave with Buckner's. —C.M.Y.

BLONDIE HAS MORE FUN

There is a venerable tradition of humor in jazz, stretching back to Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, and Louis Jordan. The Jazz Passengers, a sextet founded ten years ago by the saxophonist Roy Nathanson and the trombonist Curtis Fowlkes, have taken the jazz-humor marriage into the postmodern era. For much of their first decade the Passengers delivered punch lines in musical puns and stage banter. Adding guest vocalists on their previous album, *Jazz Passengers in Love* (High Street), was a major step forward. On *Individually Twisted* (32 Records) the former Blondie chanteuse Deborah Harry handles most of the singing and proves jazz-ready for both ballads and burlesques.

Harry (who frequently tours with the Passengers) has been acting of late, and it shows in the conviction she brings to these well-crafted originals and lyrical standards. Whether serving putdowns to Nathanson on "Porkchop," deadpanning her way through "Maybe I'm Lost," or warping her old hit "The Tide Is High," Harry knows that timing is the key to both humor and jazz vocals. Equally effective when delivering "Imitation of a Kiss" and the standard "Angel Eyes" straight, she displays the range that this material demands.

The Jazz Passengers have always emphasized this kind of flexibility—unfettered one moment, extremely focused the next. This program underscores their feeling for such traditional material as "Don'tcha Go Away Mad," for which Harry is joined by Elvis Costello. In person, with Fowlkes handling the male crooning and the soloists stretching out, the Passengers are one of the few jazz bands that take risks and still remain highly entertaining. The band's infectiously skewed world view is well captured on *Individually Twisted*. —B.B.

Harry and Costello get twisted



Bob Blumenthal is a jazz critic for The Boston Globe.

Charles M. Young reviews popular music for Playboy, Musician, and other publications.

DELTA FORCE

Since the rise of the British blues scene and the cult of the guitar hero, the most popular blues artists have emphasized virtuosity, the high point of their songs usually being the instrumental sections

that take the minor pentatonic scale to truly dizzying heights. But as the blues has spread all over the world, it has never left where it started: the depths of the Mississippi Delta, where it remains folk music played by people who

work by day and seek to entertain themselves at night.

Started by Matthew Johnson and powered by the work of the blues archivist and author Robert Palmer, Fat Possum Records has done a fine job of scouting a roster of mostly middle-aged and older artists who have had little or no exposure outside local juke joints. Theirs is a blues that emphasizes groove over virtuosity, and when the musicians find a groove they like, they just keep hammering the same three or four notes until they're satisfied.

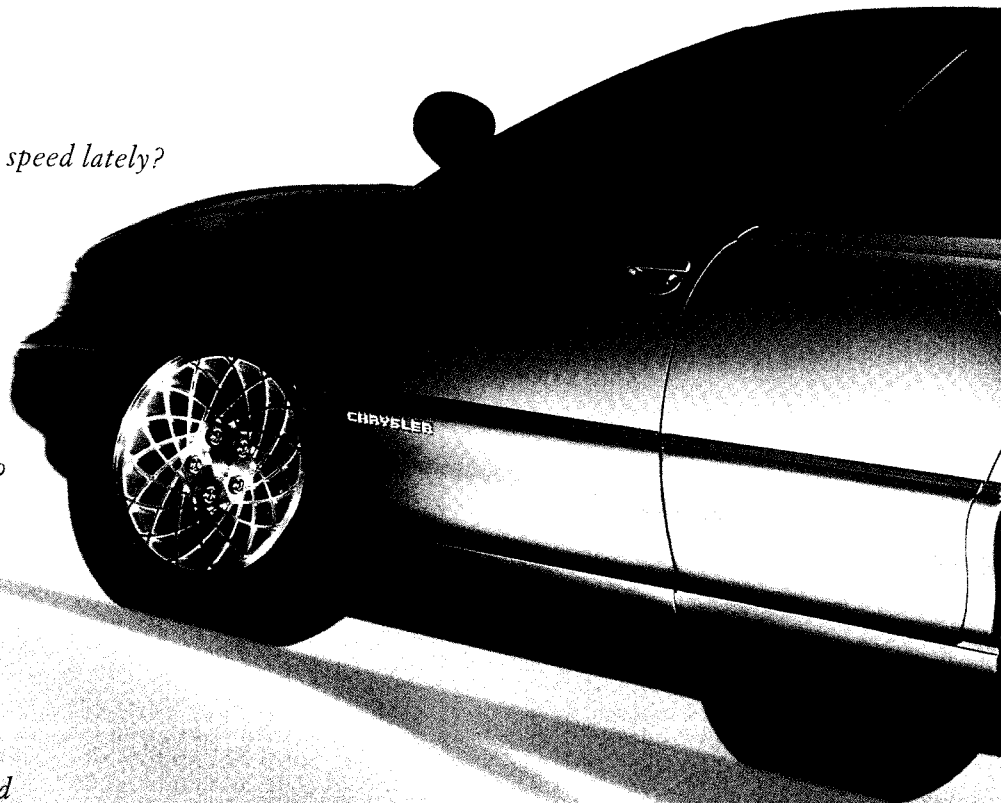
If that sounds satisfying to you, a good place to start your own groove would be *The Best of Fat Possum* (Fat Possum/Capricorn), an anthology that truly stands out among the zillions of anthologies now cluttering the genre. All six artists on the album have a supreme talent for inducing a trance state in the listener, their crudeness of approach and muddiness of sound somehow contributing to the sense of relaxation. You'll want to close your eyes and undulate to most of this "deep" blues. R. L. Burnside and Paul "Wine" Jones in particular sound like direct descendants of Howlin' Wolf, rasping and snarling their eerie and sometimes hilarious lyrics. Having recorded with the New York club fixture the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Burnside is even enjoying a taste of fashionability these days. Fashionable or not, he's got the goods. —C.M.Y.



COURTESY OF FAT POSSUM/CAPRICORN

COURTESY OF FAT POSSUM/CAPRICORN

speed lately?



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Or falling behind?

Are you even moving?

Or lingering in neutral?

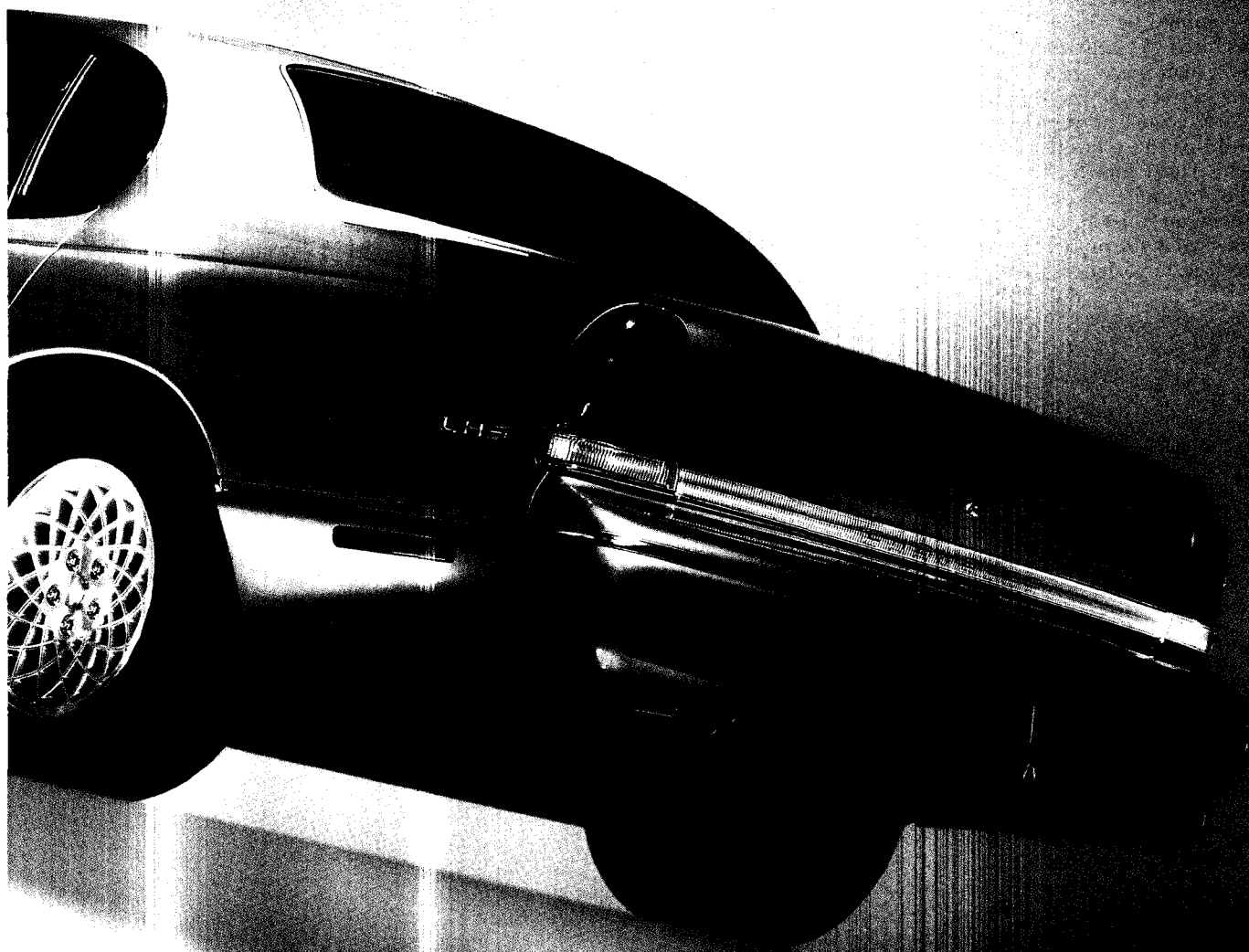
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What's new in your

Dance and Theater

BY AUSTIN BAER AND NANCY DALVA

A MATCHING PAIR

Mark Morris stands now, as the decade begins to wind down, as our century's youngest great choreographer. Far sooner than most dancer-choreographers, Morris has stepped back from his work, as if to see his visions whole. In his latest endeavor he is joined by—indeed, he was commissioned by—a perfect working partner, a man possessed of a kind of aesthetic joy at once profound and clear: Yo-Yo Ma. Since he was four or five years old this virtuoso has been playing J. S. Bach's Third Suite for Unaccompanied Cello, a work he has described as a "battle between scales and arpeggios." Once immersed in the music, Morris began to dream it, experiencing a nightmarish



Ma and the Mark Morris Dancers

visual correlative to the piece's emblematic descending notes: in his sleep he saw one of his dancers tumbling down a flight of stairs. Thus the name of the new dance, *Falling Down Stairs*, and thus its set: a simple flight of stairs and a central plinth. Like Morris's great *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* (a work set to Handel), this smaller dance offers a pellucid example of synesthesia. You feel as if you are seeing the music and hearing the dance, and you have the magical sensation of feeling music make dance happen. Yo-Yo Ma will play *Falling Down Stairs*, *The Office*, and a new dance, set to a commissioned score by Lou Harrison, during the Mark Morris Dance Group's performances at Berkeley (March 6-8). Later in the month the company performs in Palm Desert and Thousand Oaks, California. Next month it will bring *L'Allegro* to the Orange County Performing Arts Center, in Costa Mesa (April 3-6). At the Brooklyn Academy of Music it will perform two programs, one all-Harrison and the other including the premiere of a piece set to Monteverdi madrigals (April 15-20). —N.D.

LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

The rivals of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775) are Captain Absolute and Ensign Beverley, aspirants to the hand of the heiress Lydia Languish, and it is no breach of confidence to reveal that they are in truth a single person. Why the subterfuge? In most plays amorous intrigues arise because young folks and their elders are at loggerheads over wedding plans. Here, for a change, the young lovers hitch up just as their guardians would wish them to, but that is no good either; youth craves rebellion, as age must assert authority. "Age" in this case involves Mrs. Malaprop, whose garbled refinements of expression have been the ticket to immortality beyond the confines of the script. A second plot concerns the gracious Julia and the jealous



Going head to head in *The Rivals*

Faulkland, who keeps jangling their harmony with groundless discord, pushing himself and his lady relentlessly to the brink of tragedy. As all the greatest playwrights do, Sheridan roots actions in character, and his Mozartean comedy has room for some bitter follies, too. Long neglected by American players, *The Rivals* returned last season to Connecticut's Hartford Stage. The airborne production deserved to run forever—or failing that, to transfer to Broadway or be broadcast to the nation. Alas, it folded unrecorded, as regional shows do. But perhaps it paved the way for two new stagings this month, at Philadelphia's Walnut Street Theatre (March 1-April 13; 215-574-3550) and at Oregon's Portland Center Stage (March 15-April 19; 503-274-6588). —A.B.

SING US A SONG

The songwriters (John) Kander & (Fred) Ebb are no new kids on the block. In fact, their portfolio of material for Broadway (*Flora, The Red Menace, Cabaret*), TV ("Liza With a Z," "Baryshnikov on Broadway"), and stars from Sinatra to Streisand has stocked an off-Broadway review of recycled favorites (*And the World Goes 'Round*) that was a smash in its own right. Currently, the poisonous, scintillating revival of their fierce, gritty classic *Chicago* is packing them in at the Shubert Theatre (212-239-6200), with Ann Reinking and Bebe Neuwirth starring in roles that fit them like snakeskin gloves. But no gold watches for the song team, please! This month Kander & Ebb are back on the Great White Way with *Steel Pier* (212-307-4100), which turns the clock back to the Atlantic City of the 1930s, when dance marathons, Big Bands, saltwater taffy, and the high-diving horse were all the rage. The show is billed as a romance, but if past experience is any guide (and it usually is), K&E's latest will be more tart than sweet. —A.B.

Austin Baer is a writer based in New York.
Nancy Dalva is working on a series of essays on Merce Cunningham.



Sunday morning, March 9th, wake up to a special profile of Laurence Olivier. In 1982, for the first time on television, Olivier talked openly about the romance and intrigue that took place both on and off the set during his career. This two-hour program, beginning at 9:00 A.M. on the A&E Network, gives you a rare insider's view of the British stage and screen legend. Chrysler is proud to be a patron of the arts by sponsoring programming on the A&E network and this month's Arts & Entertainment Preview.

The answer to February's A&E Challenge—"Where did Tony Bennett leave his heart?"—is "In San Francisco." Congratulations to January's winner, Jane Weinberg, of Chicago, Illinois.

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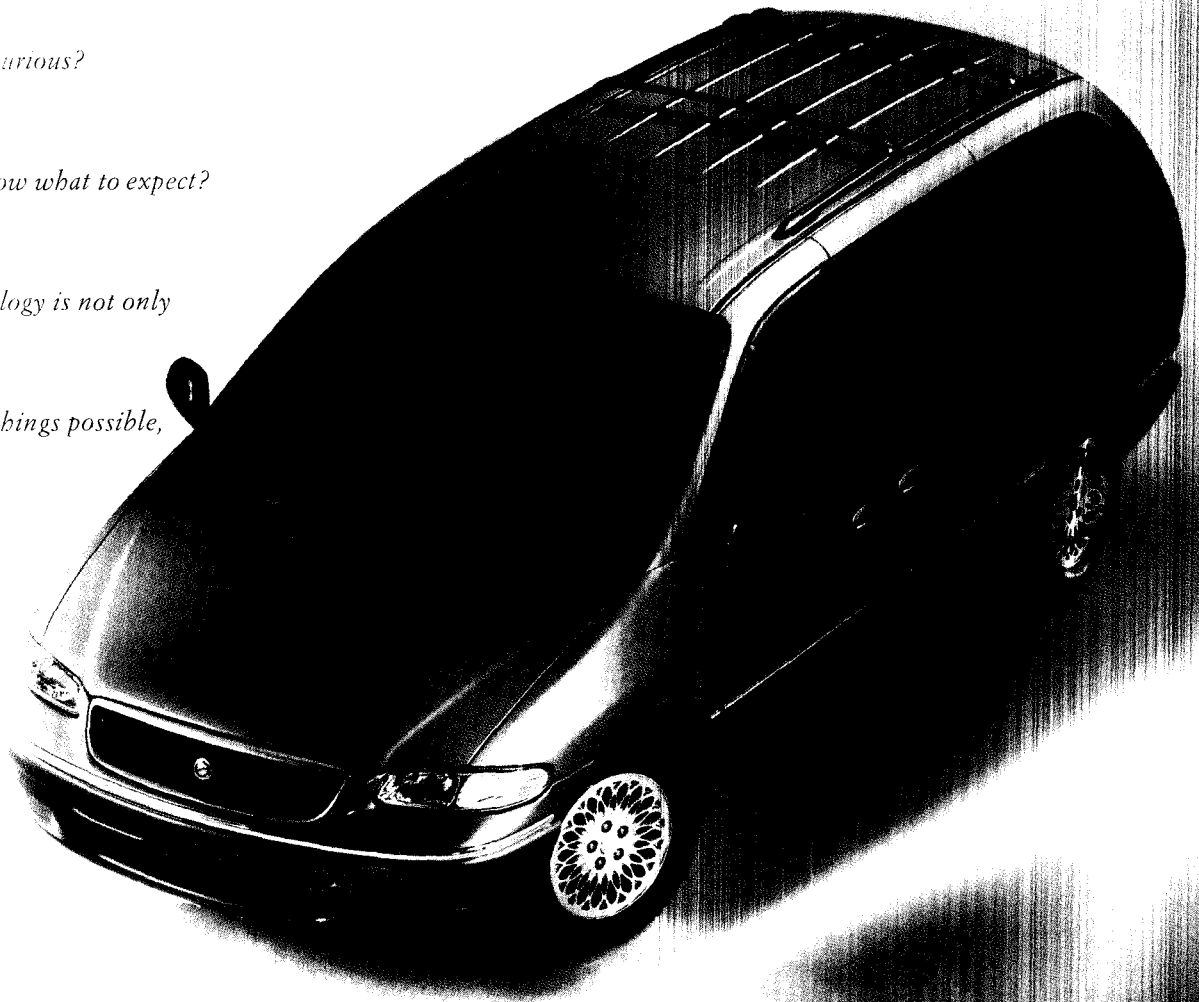
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British Islets

*The Isles of Scilly and the Channel Islands
have the virtues of England—and
some of their own*

ONLY a few Americans seem to find their way to either of the two granite archipelagoes in the English Channel, clusters of tiny windswept islands that lure vacationing Brits by the thousands. Situated on the edge of the Atlantic as if they'd been kicked southwest by the sharp toe of Land's End, the Isles of Scilly—chiefly, St. Mary's, Tresco, Bryher, St. Martin's, and St. Agnes—belong to the Duchy of Cornwall, which is to say, to Prince Charles. The Channel Islands—principally, Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, Herm, and Jethou—huddle in a French gulf eight miles off the Cherbourg peninsula and are loyal to the British Crown but self-governing. Bathed in relative

Above and at right: horticultural surprises in the Abbey Gardens, on Tresco, in the Isles of Scilly

warmth by the Gulf Stream, both groups of beach-ringed islands boast more-temperate climates and longer growing seasons than mainland (as it were) Britain. And because they lie beyond casual reach (the Scillys are twenty-eight miles off the English coast, the Channels a hundred), they aren't as trampled or as commercialized as many of England's seaside resorts have become.

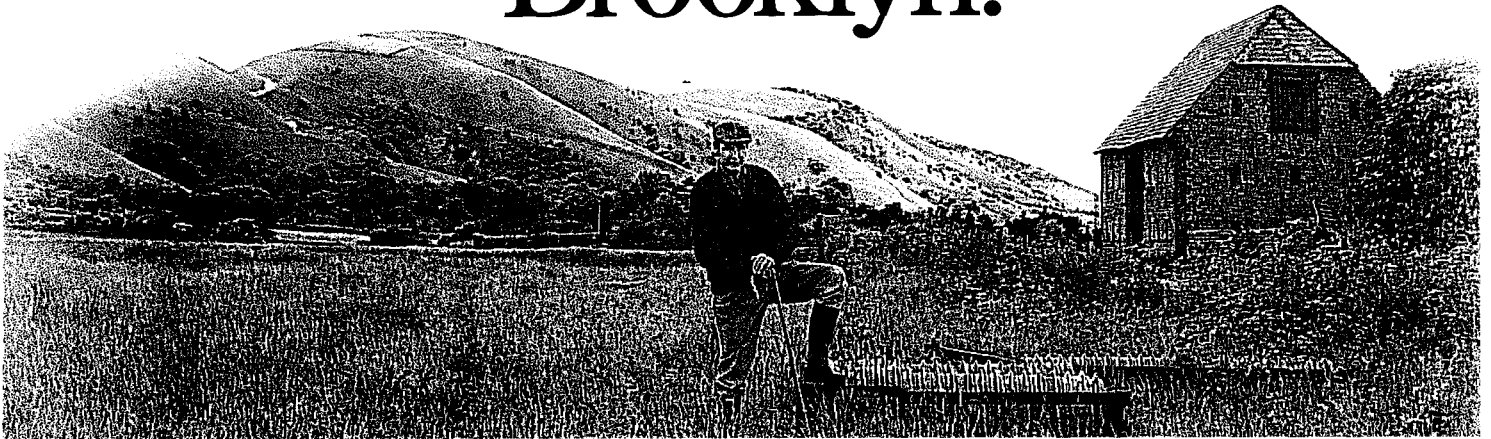
I've seen a lot of the English countryside by car, from the Devonshire moors east to the hops fields in Kent, from Cumbria's scree-scarred mountains south to the orchards in Dorset—mostly by meandering at random. It's quite different getting to the Channel's holiday islands (and off again). You have to plan, to book a crossing by water or air. In olden days, with lim-

ited navigational aids and in seas rife with marauding cutthroats, either trip was risky business. Always politically vulnerable, the Channel Islands have suffered foreign invasions forever, from bloody Viking attacks to a five-year occupation by the Germans during the Second World War. With a whopping 800 shipwrecks on record, the Isles of Scilly are just plain a geographical menace. (On one stormy night in 1707 more than 1,500 men, from a merchant fleet, were dashed to their deaths off the islands' westerly shoals.) Even as we weighed our options for travel to the Scillys last year, my mother cautioned, "Helicopters don't glide, dear. They plummet."

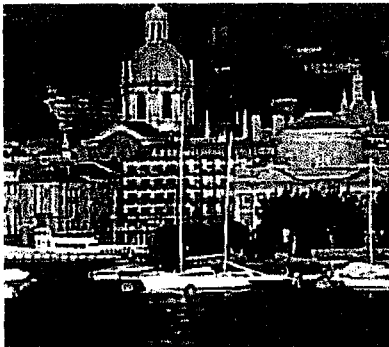
COUNTING on the Scillys to be awash in yellow and white daffodils, the islands' uniquely early export to international flower markets, my mother and I planned a late-February trip. As I rode the train five hours west from London to Penzance, snow dusted the fields, shrouded church steeples, and glinted off Cornwall's towering mounds of china-clay waste. In my hand luggage I had stuffed gloves, a scarf, and an extra sweater at the last minute, and I carried a heavy-duty windbreaker, even though the guidebooks promised a balmy welcome. (*The Isles*



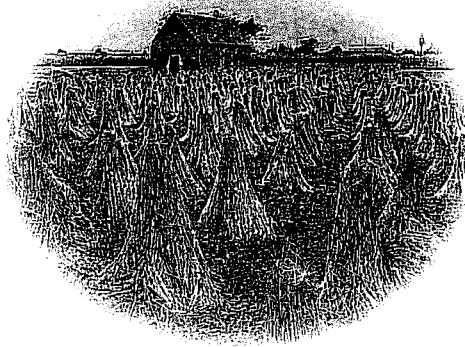
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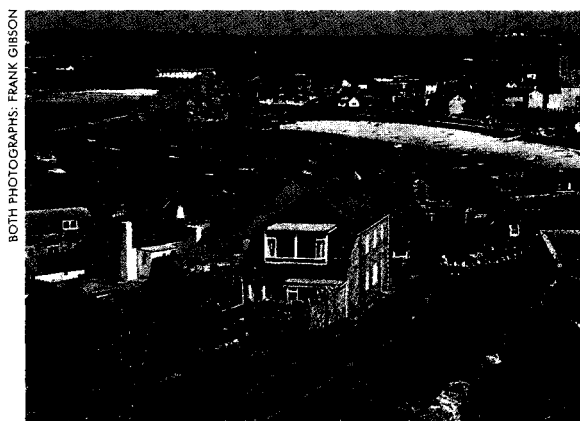
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of *Scilly Standard Guidebook* and an informative history, *The Fortunate Islands*, both by R. L. Bowley, are available from the Isles of Scilly Tourist Information Centre; call 44-1720-422536.) I met Mom at the Penzance heliport for the noisy forty-two-mile, twenty-five-minute hop to St. Mary's over opal-green seas. The air was indeed soft when we stepped out into the salty breezes, but billowing purple clouds gathered in a gray sky.

At not even three miles long, St. Mary's is the largest of the five inhabited islands among fifty-some rocky spurs that peek above a rising sea. Toward the end of the last Ice Age, around 10,000 years ago, rivers sliced the edges of Europe and Britain on the way to meet a swelling ocean that, over the years,

***On St. Mary's: Hugh Town,
and a swath of soleil d'ors, in
the foreground at bottom***



flooded coastal valleys and marooned the highest reaches of ground. Thus were the Scillys and the Channel Islands shaped. By modern calculations, nine inches of the Scillys' shoreline are swallowed every hundred years. Some islanders say it's only a matter of time before the capi-

tal, Hugh Town, is swept away, settled precariously as it is on a sandy isthmus between two raised plateaus.

Our taxi driver gave us a quizzical look when we asked to be dropped at the inn where, a week earlier, we had confirmed a reservation for two nights. It was boarded up, not a soul in sight, and we never did find out why no one was expecting us. The cab carried on to the single open hotel on the island; this was adequate as a stopover before ferrying to Tresco. The Scillys' population numbers just 2,000, with many Scillonians being employed by the tourist industry in the warmer months. From November to March, though, everyone is busy picking and packing daffodils. More than 400 tons of boxed flowers (is it easier to picture 30 million blooms?) are readied to fly to Covent Garden, Scandinavia, Europe, even Japan. When we were in Hugh Town, keys dangled in shop doors all afternoon beneath signs that read BACK

LATER.

A daffodil-based economy certainly sounds charming, but in order to make a living in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Scillonians gathered a sinister harvest: cargo from wrecks. According to island rumor, the trick was to entice ships into seeming safe harbors. Farmers hung lanterns around their cows' necks, intending the swinging lights to be mistaken for boats swaying at anchor at night. Jagged reefs greeted the bewildered skippers instead. While splintering hulls spilled cargo into the waves, local plunderers helped themselves from their longboats. A gasping sailor was more likely to get a blow to the head than a helping hand. At the Bishop and Wolf pub one night I was told that a man on Bryher was completing an extension to his house with lumber that had recently floated ashore. The

bounty keeps rolling in.

For visits to the dentist, bank, drug-store, library, or clothing store, residents of other islands must ferry to St. Mary's. Mom and I sought sandy beaches, heather-covered moors, surf-sprayed cliffs, and golden fields fragrant with soleil

d'ors—walking country. We found it on Tresco, a private estate leased since 1834 to the Dorrien Smith family. Rent for the island, once measured in plump little puffins, is paid into Prince Charles's deep pocket. Robert Dorrien Smith, the present incumbent, oversees the management of upscale time-share vacation apartments, including garden-enclosed stone cottages lulled by the waves; a cozy old inn; and a chic seasonal hotel. Also open to visitors (some 30,000 a year avail themselves of the privilege) are the Abbey Gardens, the remarkable terraces next to the manor house. Here twelve acres of subtropical plants thrive at an unlikely latitude. The 120 year-round residents of Tresco make up a friendly community in the off-season; one Sunday noon we drank a pint with the Abbey Gardens' curator, his wife and two daughters, the primary school teacher, and a fisherman.

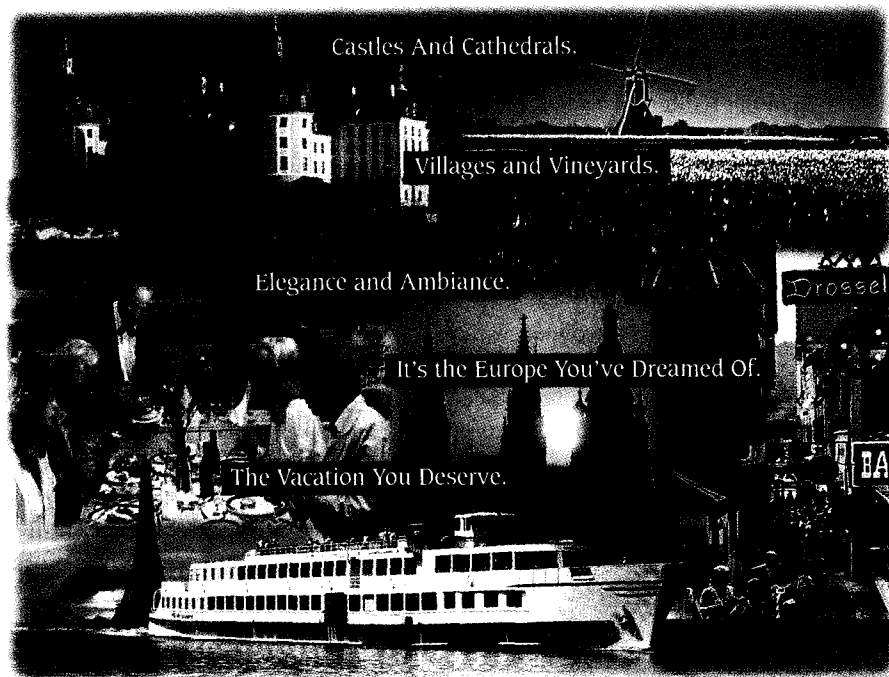
Wherever you go on Tresco, it's on foot (although a tractor-drawn wagon will deliver bags to you at the inn, the hotel, or a rented cottage). When we set off to walk every day, I learned to hook my arm decisively through my mother's. She would scan the sky for approaching storms, but by the time she had persuaded me that the menacing black front on the horizon had to be taken seriously, I would already have steered her across the island, through glossy hedges of pittosporum and purple hebe in bloom, past a small stone Anglican church set on a hillside of green pastures, north to the wild, wind-blasted moors. Mom was right, of course. We endured daily deluges. There among the sixteenth-century granite castle ruins and Bronze Age tombs, or between fabulous yellow fields of frenzied daffodils, a cloudful of marble-sized hailstones would burst on us. I lowered my head under the gale one day, wondering if the force of the ice pellets might actually chip the enamel on my teeth.

A thin sun combined with roaring winds to dry us off between barrages. With our snug New Inn—actually a warren of charming old rooms—to warm up in, we wouldn't have traded a single day of the wild weather. We fantasized about which of the delightful stone houses we'd rent (call the Holiday Cottage Department of the Tresco Estate Office, 44-1720-422849, for information) and in what month we would return. The showy

South African protea (\$10 a stalk at a florist at home in Boston), deliciously fragrant yellow acacias, and exotic banksia were blooming in profusion—but April would be even more spectacular. July and August are the best beach-sprawling months, and then the island is packed with vacationing families. The off-season promises quieter lanes and deserted bays. It takes only a plane, a train, a helicopter, and a ferry to get there.

YOU can fly directly to the two largest Channel Islands, Jersey and Guernsey, from any big airport in the United Kingdom. Pack a coat and tie or your best earrings. These are sophisticated islands, more continental than windblown. As extraordinarily prosperous international finance centers, the Bailiwicks of Jersey (consisting of one populated island, 85,000 residents) and Guernsey (five populated islands, 55,000 residents) enjoy strictly upper-class standards: the sparkling clean towns are studded with well-stocked leather, jewelry, and china shops, brass-plaques brokerage houses that sport window boxes overflowing with bright flowers, picturesque pubs, tony restaurants serving fine wines and delectable French dishes, good theater, courteous indigents, and shockingly polite drivers. The downside of this well-behaved affluence is the number of cars crowding the narrow lanes (Jersey has the largest number of cars per capita in Europe), creeping consumption of open land by golf courses, and the disappearance of the native Norman-French patois.

I admit. I expected more cows. A herd of Guernseys, those pretty, pink-nosed red-and-white milkers, had warmed my grandfather's long barn in New Hampshire when I was little, and on the trip that I took to the Channel Islands, with my husband last September, I wanted to see where they came from. The islands' most far-flung ambassadors, Jersey and Guernsey cattle have been raised on their respective (and rivalrous) islands since the 1700s. In 1930 my grandfather paid a handsome \$5,000 for his first Guernsey bull. Today a shot of semen costs less than \$20 and is shipped by air in a vacuum flask packed in liquid nitrogen. The number of herds is shrinking on the six inhabited islands, which collectively cover 100 square miles. On tiny, carless Sark, a three-mile-long feudal state ruled by a



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seigneur, who inherited the title and pays the Queen £1.79 a year in rent, the cattle range in the pastures. Visitors, tractors, and horse-drawn carts share Sark's dusty lanes. These lead to the dramatic coastal footpaths past the seigneur's splendid walled garden (open to the public), fields of sheep, a sixteenth-century windmill, and the comfortable country-house hotel where we stayed, in a wooded valley (Stocks, telephone 44-1481-832001). Hurrying to catch the ferry on our last afternoon, after poking around abandoned silver mines for too long, my urban-

of the Sea and *Les Misérables* in his eccentrically decorated four-story house, which looked over the harbor to hazy France—and directly across the street into his mistress's windows.

It was a book that first brought Guernsey evocatively to life for me: *The Book of Ebenezer Le Page*, by G. B. Edwards, a fictional reminiscence of the island from about 1890 to 1970, published with an introduction by John Fowles. Even before I arrived, I could see in my mind the island's acres of glass houses for growing tomatoes (now cut flowers), treacherous forty-foot tides, granite quarries, stone churches, walled narrow roads, and steep pocket harbors protecting a few brightly painted fishing boats. And I had gleaned something of the complicated relationship with the Germans that obtained during the Second World War, when the islands were under occupation. Ebenezer talked about the interactions between the soldiers, many of whom simply wanted to go home to take care of their families, and island civilians, who hated the German presence but also came to know individuals as decent human beings. (In fact, the talk of London this past

reared husband and I took a shortcut across a field. "Wait a minute—those are bulls," he said, retreating over a stile. "Don't worry about Guernseys," I said, marching on briskly. "They won't bother us." Later I discovered that these animals have ferocious tempers and that farmers have been chased, even killed, by their own bulls. Hazards do lurk on these tame islands.

As the ferry brought us back to Guernsey's main harbor, the view of St. Peter Port was picture-perfect. Elegant Regency and Georgian townhouses shingle the steep hillside down to the medieval waterfront, with its cobbled streets, stone piers, and thirteenth-century castle set above marinas packed with jangling masts. It's no wonder that Victor Hugo chose this panorama in the mid-1800s for most of his nearly twenty-year exile from strife-ridden France. He wrote *Toilers*

fall, when new documents from that period came to light, was the extent of the fraternization and the surprising number of half-German children born.) On a cool, bright morning a representative of the Guernsey Tourist Board (44-1481-

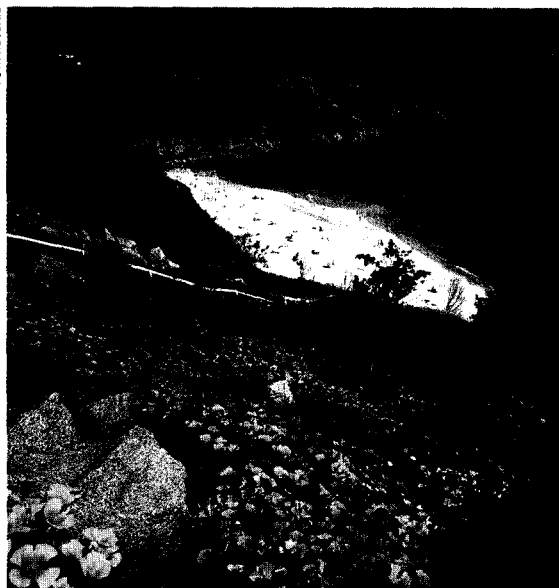


On Jersey: the deluxe Longueville Manor hotel, above; the beach at Portelet Bay, at left; and a shady country lane, below

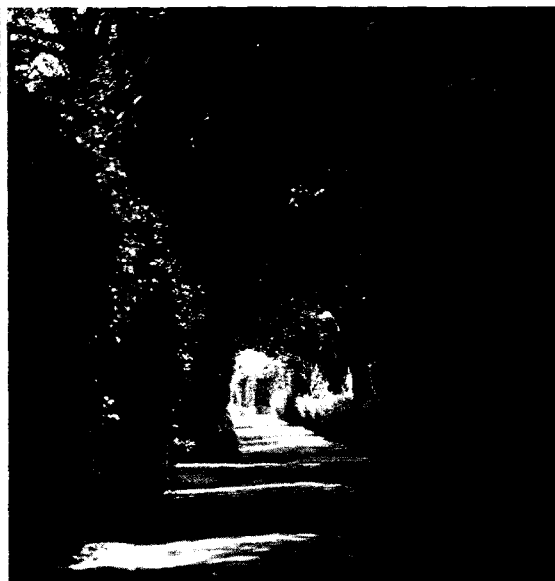
723552) drove me around the island pointing out landmarks from the book, and we chatted about the fictional characters as if they were members of a family we both knew well.

While Guernsey and Jersey insist that they are very different, each claiming vast superiority over the other, a visitor will see similar geography, learn of shared history, and experience an overlapping ambiance. The coast of Jersey, like Guernsey's, is fortified to the hilt, with castle foundations from the 1300s that have been added to by succeeding generations, round Martello towers to discourage Napoleon, massive German concrete bunkers and gun emplacements to ward off the Allies. Holding Jersey's shifting sand in place, the Hottentot fig has spread like a thick rug along the dunes. Thickets of yellow-flowered gorse and blackberries loaded with tart fruit protect the open headlands (and rampant colonies of bunnies) from the incessant winds. Inland the rolling farmland is lush, with fields of potatoes and cabbages divided by hedgerows of red-berried hawthorns that turn the roads into shady tunnels.

But for all the bucolic views, Jersey's international banks (whose deposits total around \$145 billion) are in control of the economy, and this spells the end of a way of life based on farming, fishing, and unspoiled land. New residents are kept to a handful a year: among other restrictions, newcomers must have assets of at least \$15 million. Perhaps best known as a tax haven (income tax is 20 percent, and there's no inheritance tax or VAT), Jersey has



TOM MACKIE



STEVE WELLMAN

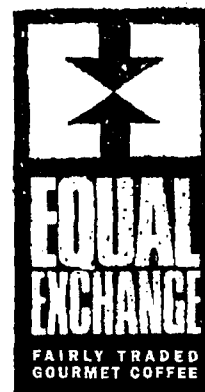
a Board of Tourism (my host on the island, telephone 44-1534-500700) that is working hard to publicize the island's many other merits. Indeed, there is a lot for visitors to see, and much of it would be of particular interest to families: ancient burial sites, a working vineyard, a lavender farm, potteries, museums, a conservation center, and extensive orchid greenhouses. My husband and I wallowed in luxury at Longueville Manor, an elegant thirteenth-century residence where each exquisite hotel room is decorated in miles of beautiful chintz (call 44-1534-25501 for more information). *Channel Islands*, in the Insight Guides series, offers a lively picture of the islands and complete lists of restaurants, lodgings, and sights.

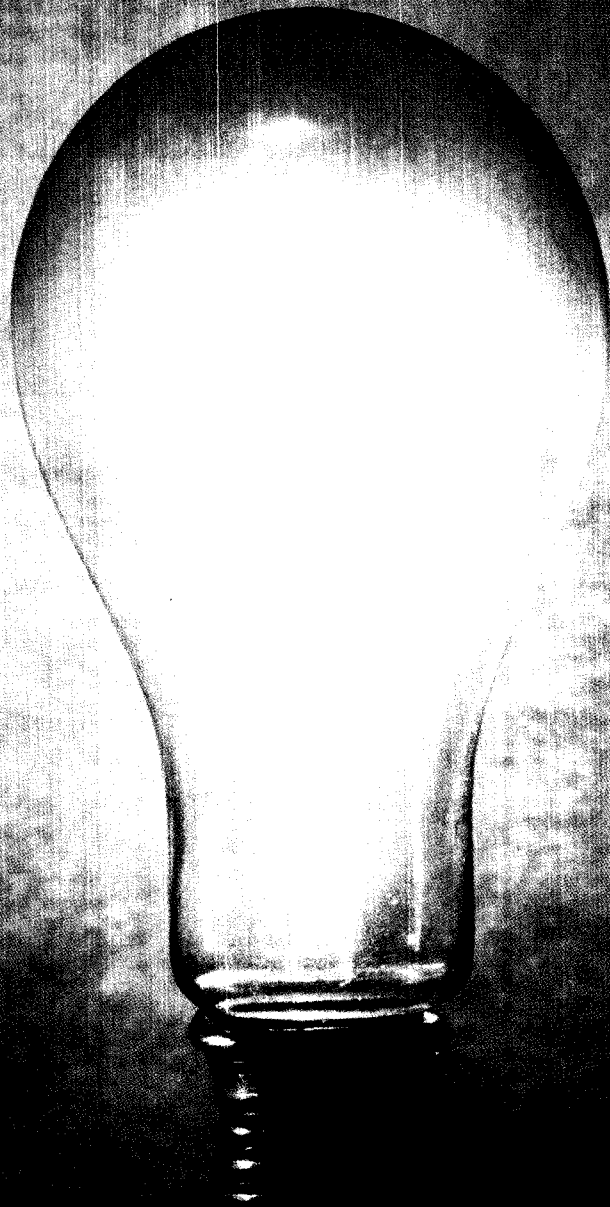
At the top of my list of things to see is the Jersey Zoo, headquarters of the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, established by the author and naturalist Gerald Durrell. In this handsomely landscaped twenty-three-acre park endangered animals are being bred to return to the wild. If you leave it with a new appreciation for some of the ugliest creatures you may ever see, such as beady-eyed lemurs called aye-ayes, skinks, geckos, big black fruit bats, *Partula* snails, and bald-headed ibises—and you *will*—the zoo will have accomplished an important part of its mission: to make people care about any animal facing extinction. Lee Durrell, the honorary director of the Trust and also a zoologist, believes that all we need is an explanation. Her late husband put it best, she says: "The world is as delicate and complicated as a spider's web. If you touch one thread you send shudders running through all the other threads. We are not just touching the web, we are tearing great holes in it."

A sensible New Englander once told me he felt sure he was going to come upon ambergris someday on a beach in the islands in the English Channel. I looked for it too—waxy gray gunk from the intestine of a whale, used to make perfume and worth a small fortune. There are lovelier treasures scattered on the sand: I picked up tiny sun-bleached limpets, pointed pink top shells with red stripes, and a turreted pelican's foot with mauve whorls. All these months later I keep finding them in the pockets of my windbreaker—much nicer than a glob of forgotten ambergris, I'm sure. ☘



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*A Clinton appointee who resigned in protest over
the new welfare law explains why it is so bad and suggests
how its worst effects could be mitigated*

I HATE welfare. To be more precise, I hate the welfare system we had until last August, when Bill Clinton signed a historic bill ending "welfare as we know it." It was a system that contributed to chronic dependency among large numbers of people who would be the first to say they would rather have a job than collect a welfare check every month—and its benefits were never enough to lift people out of poverty. In April of 1967 I helped Robert Kennedy with a speech in which he called the welfare system bankrupt and said it was hated universally, by payers and recipients alike. Criticism of welfare for not helping people to become self-supporting is nothing new.

But the bill that President Clinton signed is not welfare reform. It does not promote work effectively, and it will hurt millions of poor children by the time it is fully implemented. What's more, it bars hundreds of thousands of legal immigrants—including many who have worked in the United States for decades and paid a considerable amount in Social Security and income taxes—from receiving disability and old-age assistance and food stamps, and reduces food-

stamp assistance for millions of children in working families.

When the President was campaigning for re-election last fall, he promised that if re-elected he would undertake to fix the flaws in the bill. We are now far enough into his second term to look at the validity of that promise, by assessing its initial credibility and examining what has happened since.

I resigned as the assistant secretary for planning and evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services last September, because of my profound disagreement with the welfare bill. At the time, I confined my public statement to two sentences, saying only that I had worked as hard as I could over the past thirty-plus years to reduce poverty and that in my opinion this bill moved in the opposite direction. My judgment was that it was important to make clear the rea-

sons for my resignation but not helpful to politicize the issue further during an election campaign. And I did want to see President Clinton re-elected. Worse is not better, in my view, and Bob Dole would certainly have been worse on a wide range of issues, especially if coupled with a Republican Congress.





*I am amazed at how many people have bought the line
be done away with. Congress and the President have*

I feel free to speak out in more detail now, not to tell tales out of school but to clarify some of the history and especially to underscore the damage the bill will do and explain why the bill will be hard to fix in any fundamental way for a long time to come. It is also important to understand what is being done and could be done to minimize the damage in the short run, and what would be required for a real "fix": a strategy to prevent poverty and thus reduce the need for welfare in the first place.

Four questions are of interest now. Did the President have to sign the bill? How bad is it really, and how can the damage be minimized as the states move to implement it? Can it be fixed in this Congress? What would a real fix be, and what would it take to make that happen?

DID THE PRESIDENT HAVE TO SIGN THE BILL?

WAS the President in a tight political box in late July, when he had to decide whether to sign or veto? At the time, there was polling data in front of him showing that very few people were likely to change their intended vote in either direction if he vetoed the bill. But even if he accurately foresaw a daily pounding from Bob Dole that would ultimately draw political blood, the real point is that the President's quandary was one of his own making. He had put himself there, quite deliberately and by a series of steps that he had taken over a long period of time.

Governor Clinton campaigned in 1992 on the promise to "end welfare as we know it" and the companion phrase "Two years and you're off." He knew very well that a major piece of welfare-reform legislation, the Family Support Act, had already been passed, in 1988. As governor of Arkansas he had been deeply involved in the enactment of that law, which was based on extensive state experimentation with new welfare-to-work initiatives in the 1980s, especially GAIN in California. The 1988 law represented a major bipartisan compromise. The Democrats had given in on work requirements in return for Republican concessions on significant federal funding for job training, placement activities, and transitional child care and health coverage.

The Family Support Act had not been fully implemented, partly because not enough time had passed and partly because in the recession of the Bush years the states had been unable to provide the matching funds necessary to draw down their full share of job-related federal money. Candidate Clinton ought responsibly to have said that the Family Support Act was a major piece of legislation that needed

more time to be fully implemented before anyone could say whether it was a success or a failure.

Instead Clinton promised to end welfare as we know it and to institute what sounded like a two-year time limit. This was bumper-sticker politics—oversimplification to win votes. Polls during the campaign showed that it was very popular, and a salient item in garnering votes. Clinton's slogans were also cleverly ambiguous. On the one hand, as President, Clinton could take a relatively liberal path that was nonetheless consistent with his campaign rhetoric. In 1994 he proposed legislation that required everyone to be working by the time he or she had been on the rolls for two years. But it also said, more or less in the fine print, that people who played by the rules and couldn't find work could continue to get benefits within the same federal-state framework that had existed since 1935. The President didn't say so, but he was building—quite incrementally and on the whole responsibly—on the framework of the Family Support Act. On the other hand, candidate Clinton had let his listeners infer that he intended radical reform with real fall-off-the-cliff time limits. He never said so explicitly, though, so his liberal flank had nothing definitive to criticize. President Clinton's actual 1994 proposal was based on a responsible interpretation of what candidate Clinton had said.

Candidate Clinton, however, had let a powerful genie out of the bottle. During his first two years it mattered only insofar as his rhetoric promised far more than his legislative proposal actually offered. When the Republicans gained control of Congress in 1994, the bumper-sticker rhetoric began to matter. So you want time limits? the Republicans said in 1995. Good idea. We'll give you some serious time limits. We now propose an absolute lifetime limit of five years, cumulatively, that a family can be on welfare. End welfare as we know it? You bet. From now on we will have block grants. And what does that mean? First, that there will be no federal definition of who is eligible and therefore no guarantee of assistance to anyone; each state can decide whom to exclude in any way it wants, as long as it doesn't violate the Constitution (not much of a limitation when one reads the Supreme Court decisions on this subject). And second, that each state will get a fixed sum of federal money each year, even if a recession or a local calamity causes a state to run out of federal funds before the end of the year.

This was a truly radical proposal. For sixty years Aid to Families with Dependent Children had been premised on the idea of entitlement. "Entitlement" has become a dirty word, but it is actually a term of art. It meant two things in the AFDC program: a federally defined guarantee of assistance to families with children who met the statutory definition of

that the welfare bill was a little set of adjustments that could easily dismantled a structure that was in place for six decades.

need and complied with the other conditions of the law; and a federal guarantee to the states of a matching share of the money needed to help everyone in the state who qualified for help. (AFDC was never a guarantor of income at any particular level. States chose their own benefit levels, and no state's AFDC benefits, even when coupled with food stamps, currently lift families out of poverty.) The block grants will end the entitlement in both respects, and in addition the time limits say that federally supported help will end even if a family has done everything that was asked of it and even if it is still needy.

In 1995 the President had a new decision to make. What should he say about the Republican proposal? The Republicans started considering the issue in the House in the heady post-election period, when it seemed not at all dissonant for them to talk of reviving orphanages and turning the school-lunch program into block grants. The Administration concentrated its fire on these exponentially extreme measures and said nothing about time limits and the destruction of the entitlement. The President won the public argument about orphanages and school lunches, but his silence on the rest of the bill made it more difficult to oppose the time limits and the ending of the entitlement. For months, while the Republican bill was going through the House and the Senate, the President said nothing further. He might have said, "This isn't what I meant in my campaign rhetoric of 1992." He might have said, "This is totally inconsistent with the bill that I sent up to the Hill last year." He might have sent up a new bill that clearly outlined his position. He might have insisted that the waivers he was giving the states so that they could experiment with reform under the existing law were a strategy superior to the Republican proposals. He did none of these things, despite importuning from Hill Democrats, outside advocates, and people within the Administration.

The House Democrats had remained remarkably unified in opposition to the House Republicans' bill, which gave new meaning to the word "draconian." But when Democratic senators were deciding how to vote on the more moderate Senate bill, which nonetheless contained the entitlement-ending block grants and the absolute time limit, they looked to the President for a signal. Had he signaled that he remained firm in opposing block grants and the arbitrary time limit, there is every reason to believe that all but a handful of Democratic senators would have stayed with him. The opposite signal left them with no presidential cover for a vote against the Senate bill. It invited them to vote for the bill.

Prior to the Senate vote on September 19, 1995, the President sent the signal that he could sign the Senate bill (but warned that he would veto a bill that was too much like the

House version). The Senate Democrats collapsed and the Senate passed its version of the bill by a vote of 87 to 12. To make matters worse, the President had been presented with an analysis showing that the Senate bill would push more than a million children into poverty. The analysis had been commissioned from the Urban Institute by Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala's staff (specifically Wendell Primus, the deputy assistant secretary for human-services policy), and Shalala had personally handed it to the President on September 15.

THE BOTTOM, REACHED

THIS was *the* major milestone in the political race to the bottom. The President had said he was willing to sign legislation that would end a sixty-year commitment to provide assistance to all needy families with children who met the federal eligibility requirements. In the floor debate Senator Edward Kennedy, who voted against the bill, described it as "legislative child abuse."

In late 1995 and early 1996 the Republicans saved the President from having to make good on his willingness to sign a welfare block-grant bill by sending him versions of the bill that contained horrible provisions concerning food stamps, disabled children, and foster care, which he vetoed. The Republican strategy at the time was to run against the President as a hypocrite who talked welfare reform but wouldn't deliver when he had the chance.

But President Clinton was not finished. Perhaps he saw some threat to himself in the Republican strategy. Perhaps he did not see the entitlement as being quite so meaningful as others did. It is important to remember that he is not only a former governor but the former governor of Arkansas. AFDC benefits in Arkansas were so low that he might not have seen the entitlement as meaning what it does in higher-benefit states. He might have thought that as governor of Arkansas he would have been able to design a better program if he had received the federal money in the form of a block grant, without the restrictions, limited as they were, that were imposed by the federal AFDC program. And many people have remarked that he seems never to have met a governor he didn't like—an observation that appeared valid even after the 1994 elections reduced the number of Democrats in the gubernatorial ranks.

Whatever the reason, when the governors came to town for their winter meetings early last year, the President invited them to draft and submit new proposals on welfare and, for that matter, Medicaid. For a time it seemed to some observers that the President might even be willing to consider

block grants for Medicaid, but it quickly became apparent that Medicaid block grants would have negative consequences for a much larger slice of the electorate than would welfare block grants. Large numbers of middle-income people had elderly parents in nursing homes whose bills were paid by Medicaid—to say nothing of the potential impact on hospitals, physicians, and the nursing homes themselves, all of which groups have substantial political clout. Welfare had no politically powerful constituency that would be hurt by conversion to block grants.

Hill Republicans, still pursuing the strategy of giving the President only bills that he could not sign, tied the governors' welfare and Medicaid proposals into a single bill. It was clear that the President would veto the combined bill, because by spring he had come out firmly against block grants for Medicaid.

As of late spring it looked as if a stalemate had been reached, and that 1996 might pass without enactment of a welfare bill. Behind the scenes, however, White House political people—Rahm Emanuel and Bruce Reed, in particular—were telling Hill Republicans almost daily that if they separated the welfare and Medicaid bills, they could get a bill that the President would sign. In early summer a new dynamic arose on the Hill. House Republicans, especially freshmen, began to worry that they were vulnerable to defeat on the basis that they had accomplished so little of what they had come to Washington to do. Thinking that Bob Dole was a sure loser anyway, they decided to save their own skins even though it would be to the detriment of the Dole candidacy. The Republicans decided to separate welfare and Medicaid, and began to move a freestanding welfare bill through Congress. The Senate and House bills were each roughly comparable to the respective Senate and House bills passed in 1995, but this time the conference outcome was very different: the conference produced a bill that was fairly close to what the Senate had passed. This time the Hill Republicans wanted the President to sign it.

The game was over. Now no one could ever say again with any credibility that this President is an old liberal.

HOW BAD IS IT, REALLY?

BEFORE I begin my critique, I need to say something about the motivations of those who genuinely support this new approach. Some of them, anyway, had in my estimation gotten impatient with the chronicity of a significant part of the welfare caseload and the apparent intractability of the problem. I believe they had essentially decided that handing everything over to the states was the only thing left to try that didn't cost a huge amount of money. They may well understand that there will be a certain amount of suffering, and may believe that the bucket of ice-cold water being thrown on poor people now will result in a

future generation that will take much more personal responsibility for itself and its children. I think they have made a terrible mistake, as I will try to show, but I respect the frustration that motivated at least some of them.

How bad, then, is it? Very bad. The story has never been fully told, because so many of those who would have shouted their opposition from the rooftops if a Republican President had done this were boxed in by their desire to see the President re-elected and in some cases by their own votes for the bill (of which, many in the Senate had been foreordained by the President's squeeze play in September of 1995).

The same de facto conspiracy of silence has enveloped the issue of whether the bill can be easily fixed. The President got a free ride through the elections on that point because no one on his side, myself included, wanted to call him on it. He even made a campaign issue of it, saying that one reason he should be re-elected was that only he could be trusted to fix the flaws in the legislation. David Broder wrote in *The Washington Post* in late August that re-electing the President in response to this plea would be like giving Jack the Ripper a scholarship to medical school.

Why is the new law so bad? To begin with, it turned out that after all the noise and heat over the past two years about balancing the budget, the only deep, multi-year budget cuts actually enacted were those in this bill, affecting low-income people.

The magnitude of the impact is stunning. Its dimensions were estimated by the Urban Institute, using the same model that produced the Department of Health and Human Services study a year earlier. To ensure credibility for the study, its authors made optimistic assumptions: two thirds of long-term recipients would find jobs, and all states would maintain their current levels of financial support for the benefit structure. Nonetheless, the study showed, the bill would move 2.6 million people, including 1.1 million children, into poverty. It also predicted some powerful effects not contained in the previous year's analysis, which had been constrained in what it could cover because it had been sponsored by the Administration. The new study showed that a total of 11 million families—10 percent of all American families—would lose income under the bill. This included more than eight million families with children, many of them working families affected by the food-stamp cuts, which would lose an average of about \$1,300 per family. Many working families with income a little above what we call the poverty line (right now \$12,158 for a family of three) would lose income without being made officially poor, and many families already poor would be made poorer.

The view expressed by the White House and by Hill Democrats, who wanted to put their votes for the bill in the best light, was that the parts of the bill affecting immigrants and food stamps were awful (and would be re-addressed in

... so the other night I'm making chocolate souffle.

What a mess.

There's stuff *e v e r y w h e r e* .

Suddenly, I realize

I'm missing a key ingredient.

Time to improvise.

Okay for cooking.

Not for investing.

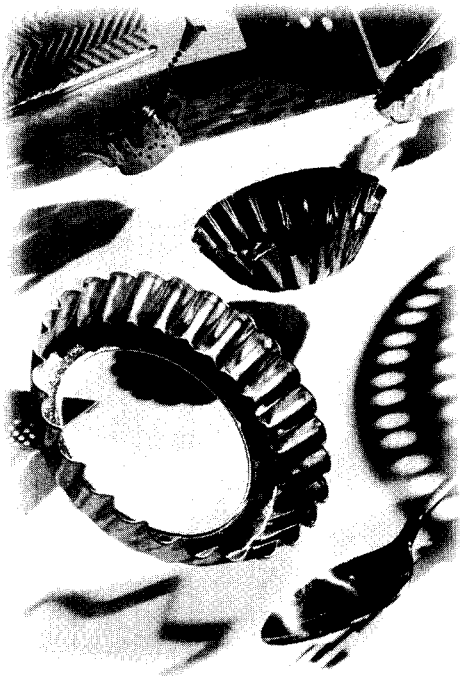
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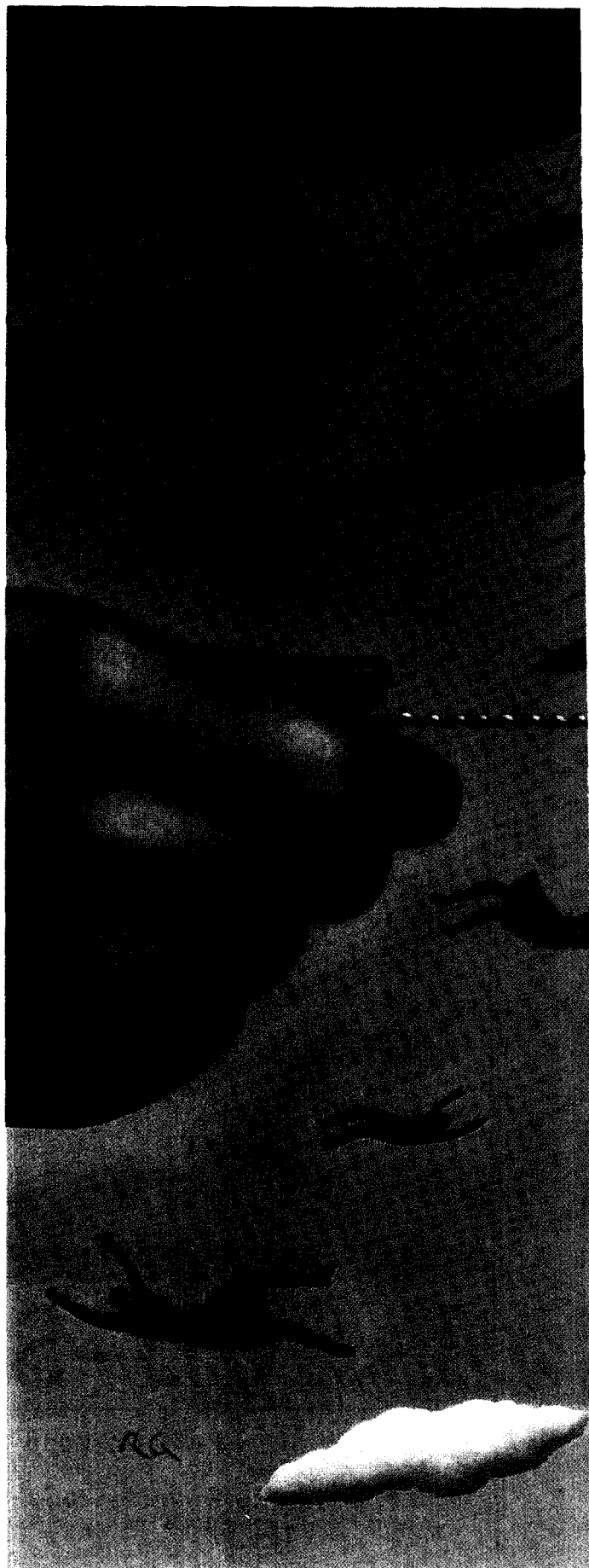
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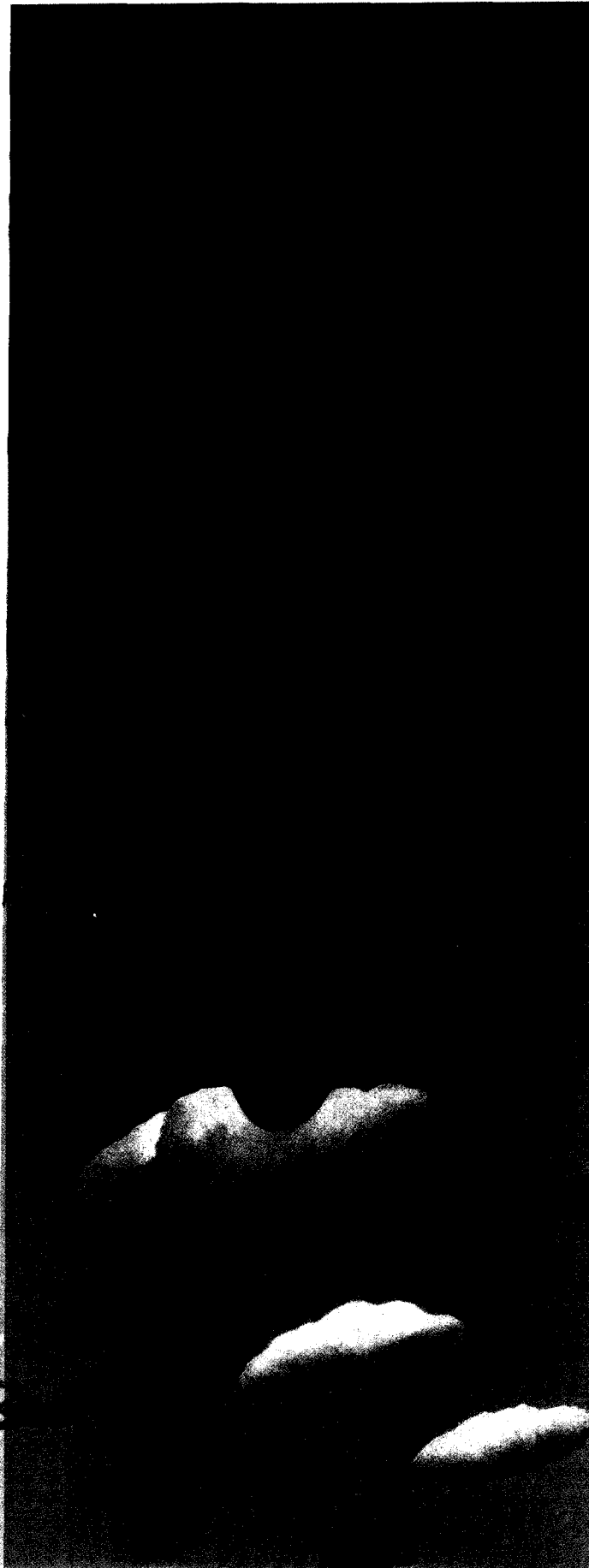
the future) but that the welfare-reform part of the bill was basically all right. The immigrant and food-stamp parts of the bill *are* awful, but so is the welfare part.

The immigrant provisions are strong stuff. Most legal immigrants currently in the country and nearly all future legal immigrants are to be denied Supplemental Security Income and food stamps. States have the option of denying them Medicaid and welfare as well. New immigrants will be excluded from most federal means-tested programs, including Medicaid, for the first five years they are in the country. All of this will save about \$22 billion over the next six years—about 40 percent of the savings in the bill. The SSI cuts are the worst. Almost 800,000 legal immigrants receive SSI, and most of these will be cut off. Many elderly and disabled noncitizens who have been in the United States for a long time and lack the mental capacity to do what is necessary to become citizens will be thrown out of their homes or out of nursing homes or other group residential settings that are no longer reimbursed for their care.

The food-stamp cuts are very troubling too. Exclusive of the food-stamp cuts for immigrants, they involve savings of about \$24 billion. Almost half of that is in across-the-board cuts in the way benefits are calculated. About two thirds of the benefit reductions will be borne by families with children, many of them working families (thus reflecting a policy outcome wildly inconsistent with the stated purposes of the overall bill). Perhaps the most troubling cut is the one limiting food stamps to three months out of every three years for unemployed adults under age fifty who are not raising children. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities describes this as “probably the single harshest provision written into a major safety net program in at least 30 years”—although it turns out that more states than the drafters anticipated can ask for an exception that was written to accommodate places with disproportionate unemployment. One of the great strengths of food stamps until now has been that it was the one major program for the poor in which help was based only on need, with no reference to family status or age. It was the safety net under the safety net. That principle of pure need-based eligibility has now been breached.

Neither the cuts for immigrants nor the food-stamp cuts have anything to do with welfare reform. Many of them are just mean, with no good policy justification. The bill also contains other budget and benefit reductions unrelated to welfare. The definition of SSI eligibility for disabled children has been narrowed, which will result in removal from the rolls of 100,000 to 200,000 of the 965,000 children who currently receive SSI. Although there was broad agreement that some tightening in eligibility was warranted, the changes actually made will result in the loss of coverage for some children who if they were adults would be considered disabled. Particularly affected are children with multiple impairments no one of which is severe enough to meet the new,





more stringent criteria. Child-nutrition programs have also been cut, by nearly \$3 billion over six years, affecting meals for children in family day care and in the summer food program. Federal funding for social services has been cut by a six-year total of \$2.5 billion. This is a 15 percent cut in an important area, and will hamper the states in providing exactly the kind of counseling and support that families often need if a parent is going to succeed in the workplace.

So this is hardly just a welfare bill. In fact, most of its budget reductions come in programs for the poor other than welfare, and many of them affect working families. Many of them are just cuts, not reform. (The bill also contains an elaborate reform of federal child-support laws, which had broad bipartisan support and could easily have been enacted as separate legislation.)

THIS brings us to welfare itself. Basically, the block grants mean that the states can now do almost anything they want—even provide no cash benefits at all. There is no requirement in the new law that the assistance provided to needy families be in the form of cash. States may contract out any or all of what they do to charitable, religious, or private organizations, and provide certificates or vouchers to recipients of assistance which can be redeemed with a contract organization. So the whole system could be run by a corporation or a religious organization if a state so chooses (although the latter could raise constitutional questions, depending on how the arrangement is configured). Or a state could delegate everything to the counties, since the law explicitly says that the program need not be run “in a uniform manner” throughout a state, and the counties could have varying benefit and program frameworks. For good or for ill, the states are in the process of working their way through an enormous—indeed, a bewildering—array of choices, which many of them are ill equipped to make, and which outside advocates are working hard to help them make well.

The change in the structure is total. Previously there was a national definition of eligibility. With some limitations regarding two-parent families, any needy family with children could get help. There were rules about participation in work and training, but anybody who played by the rules could continue to get assistance. If people were thrown off the rolls without justification, they could get a hearing to set things right, and could go to court if necessary. The system will no longer work that way.

The other major structural change is that federal money is now capped. The block grants total \$16.4 billion annually for the country, with no new funding for jobs and training and placement efforts, which are in fact very expensive activities to carry out. For the first couple of years most of the states will get a little more money than they have been getting, because the formula gives them what they were spending a couple of years ago, and welfare rolls have actually de-

creased somewhat almost everywhere (a fact frequently touted by the President, although one might wonder why the new law was so urgently needed if the rolls had gone down by more than two million people without it).

Many governors are currently crowing about this “wind-fall” of new federal money. But what they are not telling their voters is that the federal funding will stay the same for the next six years, with no adjustment for inflation or population growth, so by 2002 states will have considerably less federal money to spend than they would have had under AFDC. The states will soon have to choose between benefits and job-related activities, with the very real possibility that they will run out of federal money before the end of a given year. A small contingency fund exists for recessions, and an even smaller fund to compensate for disproportionate population increases, but it is easy to foresee a time when states will have to either tell applicants to wait for the next fiscal year or spend their own money to keep benefits flowing.

The bill closes its eyes to all the facts and complexities of the real world and essentially says to recipients, Find a job. That has a nice bumper-sticker ring to it. But as a one-size-fits-all recipe it is totally unrealistic.

Total cutoffs of help will be felt right away only by immigrants and disabled children—not insignificant exceptions. The big hit, which could be very big, will come when the time limits go into effect—in five years, or less if the state so chooses—or when a recession hits. State treasuries are relatively flush at the moment, with the nation in the midst of a modest boom period. When the time limits first take effect, a large group of people in each state will fall into the abyss all at once. Otherwise the effects will be fairly gradual. Calcutta will not break out instantly on American streets.

To the extent that there are any constraints on the states in the new law, they are negative. The two largest—and they are very large—are the time limit and the work-participation requirements.

There is a cumulative lifetime limit of five years on benefits paid for with federal money, and states are free to impose shorter time limits if they like. One exception is permitted, to be applied at the state’s discretion: as much as 20 percent of the caseload at any particular time may be people who have already received assistance for five years. This sounds promising until one understands that about half the current caseload is composed of people who have been on the rolls longer than five years. A recent study sponsored by the Kaiser Foundation found that 30 percent of the caseload is composed of women who are caring for disabled children or are disabled themselves. The time limits will be especially tough in states that have large areas in chronic recession—for example, the coal-mining areas of Appalachia. And they will be even tougher when the country as a whole sinks into recession. It will make no difference if a recipient has played by all the rules and sought work faithfully, as required. When the

limit is reached and the state is unable or unwilling to grant an exception, welfare will be over for that family forever.

Under the work-participation requirements, 25 percent of the caseload must be working or in training this year, and 50 percent by 2002. For two-parent families 75 percent of the caseload must be working or in training, and the number goes up to 90 percent in two years. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the bill falls \$12 billion short of providing enough funding over the next six years for the states to meet the work requirements. Even the highly advertised increased child-care funding falls more than \$1 billion short of providing enough funding for all who would have to work in order for the work requirements to be satisfied. States that fail to meet the work requirements lose increasing percentages of their block grants.

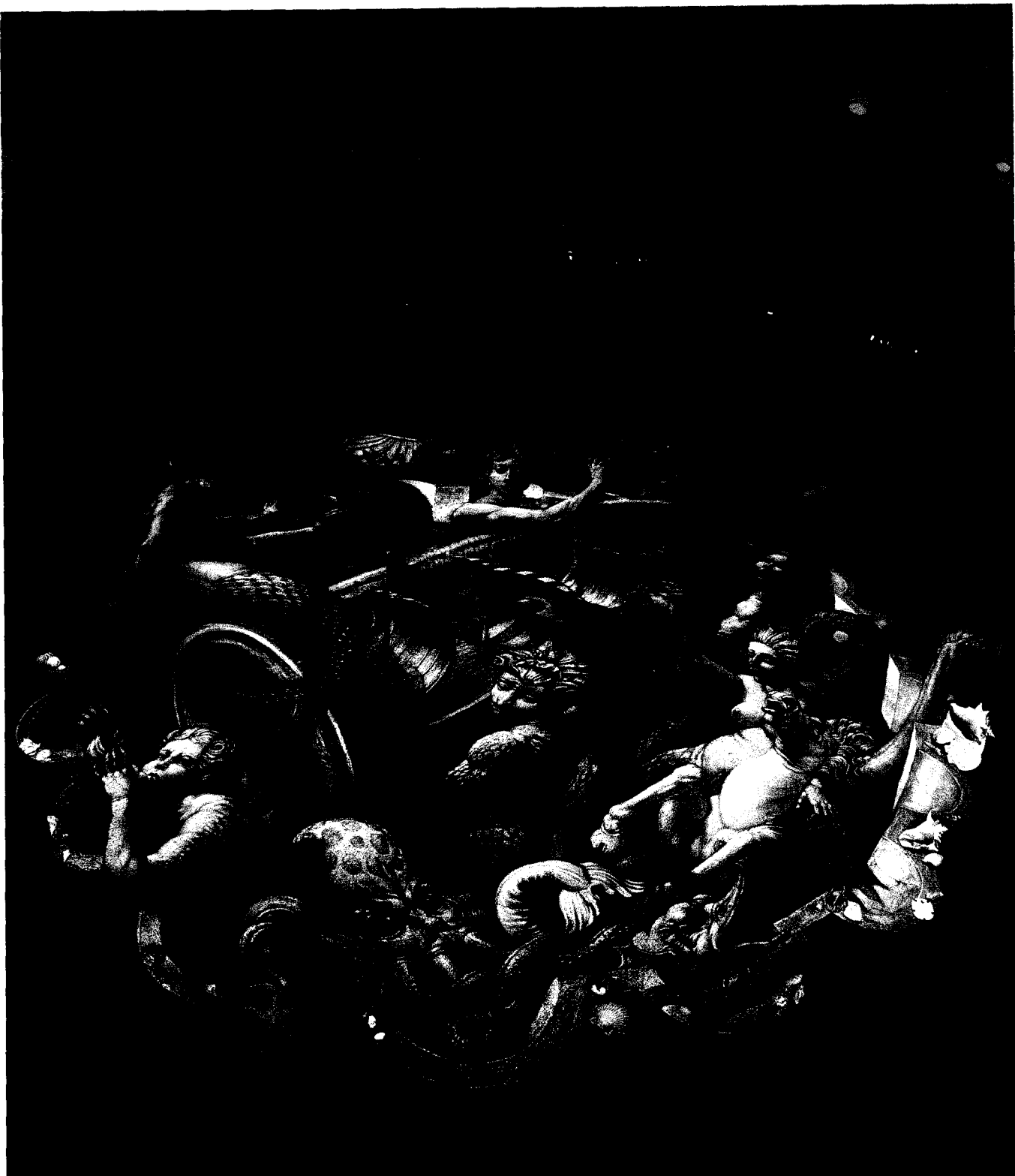
The states are given a rather Machiavellian out. The law in effect assumes that any reduction in the rolls reflects people who have gone to work. So states have a de facto incentive to get people off the rolls in any way they can, not necessarily by getting them into work activities.

The states can shift a big chunk of their own money out of the program if they want to. There is no matching requirement for the states, only a maintenance-of-effort requirement that each state keep spending at least 80 percent of what it was previously contributing. This will allow as much as \$40 billion nationally to be withheld from paying benefits over the next six years, on top of the \$55 billion cut by the bill itself. Moreover, the 80 percent requirement is a static number, so the funding base will immediately start being eroded by inflation.

Besides being able to transfer some of their own money out, the states are allowed to transfer up to 30 percent of their federal block grants to spending on child care or other social services. Among other things, this will encourage them to adopt time limits shorter than five years, because this would save federal money that could then be devoted to child care and other help that families need in order to be able to go to work. Hobson’s choice will flourish.

The contingency fund to cushion against the impact of recessions or local economic crises is wholly inadequate—\$2 billion over five years. Welfare costs rose by \$6 billion in three years during the recession of the early nineties.

The federal AFDC law required the states to make decisions on applications within forty-five days and to pay, retroactively if necessary, from the thirtieth day after the application was put in. There is no such requirement in the new law. All we know from the new law is that the state has to tell the Secretary of Health and Human Services what its “objective criteria” will be for “the delivery of benefits,” and how it will accord “fair and equitable treatment” to recipients, including how it will give “adversely affected” recipients an opportunity to be heard. This is weak, to say the least.



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THOSE WHO APPRECIATE QUALITY ENJOY IT RESPONSIBLY.



What can we predict will happen? No state will want to be a magnet for people from other states by virtue of a relatively generous benefit structure. States will therefore try to make their benefit structure less, not more, attractive. If states delegate decisions about benefit levels to their counties, the race to the bottom will develop within states as well.

FIFTY WELFARE POLICIES

GIVEN this framework, what can we predict will happen? No state will want to be a magnet for people from other states by virtue of a relatively generous benefit structure. This is common sense, unfortunately. As states seek to ensure that they are not more generous than their neighbors, they will try to make their benefit structures less, not more, attractive. If states delegate decisions about benefit levels to their counties, the race to the bottom will develop within states as well.

I do not wish to imply that all states, or even most states,

are going to take the opportunity to engage in punitive policy behavior. There will be a political dynamic in the process whereby each state implements the law. Advocates can organize and express themselves to good effect, and legislatures can frustrate or soften governors' intentions. There is another important ameliorating factor: many welfare administrators are concerned about the dangers that lie in the new law and will seek to implement it as constructively as they can, working to avoid some of the more radical negative possibilities.

Citizens can make a difference in what happens in their state. They can push to make sure that it doesn't adopt a time limit shorter than five years, doesn't reduce its own investment of funds, doesn't cut benefits, doesn't transfer money out of the block grant, doesn't dismantle procedural protections, and doesn't create bureaucratic hurdles that will discourage recipients. They can press for state and local funds to help legal immigrants who have been cut off from SSI or food stamps and children who have been victimized by the time limits. They can advocate an energetic and realistic jobs and training strategy, with maximum involvement by the private sector. And they can begin organizing and putting together the elements of a real fix, which I will lay out shortly.

VILLANELLE AFTER A BURIAL

Whatever they turned into wasn't ash.
Afraid of finding teeth, or something bony,
We had to face the aftermath of flesh.

Father's looked like coral: coarse, whitish.
Mother's looked like sand, but a fine dark gray.
Whatever they turned into wasn't ash—

More like a grainy noise that rose, a shush
We buried under their willow, spilled really.
We had to face it: the aftermath of flesh

Takes just two shovelfuls of dirt to finish
Off completely. Don't expect epiphanies,
Whatever they turned into. Wasn't ash

A dusty enough word, though, for the wish
That bits of spirit settle in what we see
After we face the aftermath of flesh?

We drove off in three pairs, each astonished
By awkward living talk, jittery keys.
We had to face the aftermath of flesh
(Whatever they turned into) wasn't ash.

—STEVEN CRAMER

THE JOBS GAP

EVEN given effective advocacy, relatively responsive legislatures and welfare administrators, and serious efforts to find private-sector jobs, the deck is stacked against success, especially in states that have high concentrations of poverty and large welfare caseloads. The basic issue is jobs. *There simply are not enough jobs now.* Four million adults are receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Half of them are long-term recipients. In city after city around America the number of people who will have to find jobs will quickly dwarf the number of new jobs created in recent years. Many cities have actually lost jobs over the past five to ten years. New York City, for example, has lost 227,000 jobs since 1990, and the New York metropolitan area overall has lost 260,000 over the same period. New York City had more than 300,000 adults in the AFDC caseload in 1995, to say nothing of the adults without dependent children who are receiving general assistance. Statistics aside, all one has to do is go to Chicago, or to Youngstown, Ohio, or to Newark, or peruse William Julius Wilson's powerful new book, *When Work Disappears*, to get the point. The fact is that there are not enough appropriate private-sector jobs in appropriate locations even now, when unem-

to be a magnet for people from other states by virtue of a generous benefits less, not more, attractive—a race to the bottom.

ployment is about as low as it ever gets in this country.

For some people, staying on welfare was dictated by economics, because it involved a choice between the “poor support” of welfare, to use the Harvard professor David Ellwood’s term, and the even worse situation of a low-wage job, with its take-home pay reduced by the out-of-pocket costs of commuting and day care, and the potentially incalculable effects of losing health coverage. With time limits these people will no longer have that choice, unappetizing as it was, and will be forced to take a job that leaves them even deeper in poverty. How many people will be able to get and keep a job, even a lousy job, is impossible to say, but it is far from all of those who have been on welfare for an extended period of time.

The labor market, even in its current relatively heated state, is not friendly to people with little education and few marketable skills, poor work habits, and various personal and family problems that interfere with regular and punctual attendance. People spend long spells on welfare or are headed in that direction for reasons other than economic choice or, for that matter, laziness. If we are going to put long-term welfare recipients to work—and we should make every effort to do so—it will be difficult and it will cost money to train people, to place them, and to provide continuing support so that they can keep a job once they get it. If they are to have child care and health coverage, that will cost still more. Many of the jobs that people will get will not offer health coverage, so transitional Medicaid for a year or two will not suffice. People who have been on welfare for a long time will too often not make it in their first job and will need continuing help toward and into a second job. Both because the private sector may well not produce enough jobs right away and because not all welfare recipients will be ready for immediate placement in a private-sector job, it will be appropriate also to use public jobs or jobs with nonprofit organizations at least as a transition if not as permanent positions. All of this costs real money.

For a lot of people it will not work at all. Kansas City’s experience is sadly instructive here. In the past two years, in a very well-designed and well-implemented effort, a local program was able to put 1,409 out of 15,562 welfare recipients to work. As of last December only 730 were still at work. The efforts of Toby Herr and Project Match in Chicago’s Cabrini-Green public-housing project are another case in point. Working individually and intensively with women and supporting them through successive jobs until they found one they were able to keep. Herr had managed to place 54 percent of her clients in year-round jobs at the end of five years. This is a remarkable (and unusual) success

rate, but it also shows how unrealistic is a structure that offers only a 20 percent exception to the five-year time limit.

I want to be very clear: I am not questioning the willingness of long-term welfare recipients to work. Their unemployment is significantly related to their capacity to work, whether for personal or family reasons, far more than to their willingness to work. Many long-term welfare recipients are functionally disabled even if they are not disabled in a legal sense. News coverage of what the new law will mean has been replete with heartbreaking stories of women who desperately want to work but have severe trouble learning how to operate a cash register or can’t remember basic things they need to master. A study in the state of Washington shows that 36 percent of the caseload have learning disabilities that have never been remediated. Many others have disabled children or parents for whom they are the primary caretakers. Large numbers are victims of domestic violence and risk physical retaliation if they enter the workplace. These personal and family problems make such people poor candidates for work in the best of circumstances. Arbitrary time limits on their benefits will not make them likelier to gain and hold employment. When unemployment goes back up to six or seven or eight percent nationally, as it will at some point, the idea that the private sector will employ and continue to employ those who are the hardest to employ will be even more fanciful than it is at the current, relatively propitious moment.

When the time limits take effect, the realities occasioned by the meeting of a bottom-line-based labor market with so many of our society’s last hired and first fired will come into focus. Of course, a considerable number will not fall off the cliff. An increased number will have obtained jobs along the way. The time limits will help some people to discipline themselves and ration their years of available assistance. Some will move in with family or friends when their benefits are exhausted. The 20 percent exception will help as well.

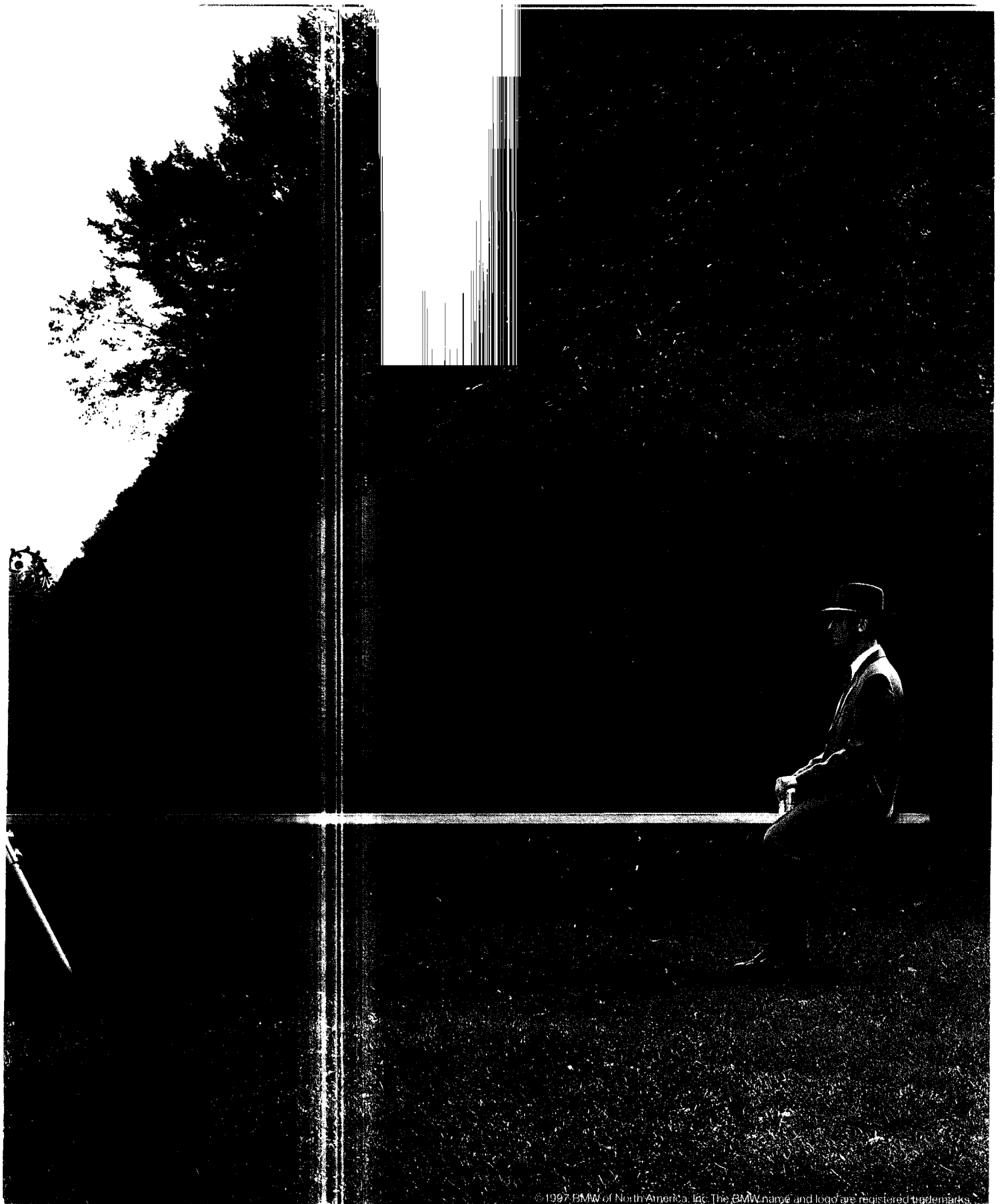
But there will be suffering. Some of the damage will be obvious—more homelessness, for example, with more demand on already strapped shelters and soup kitchens. The ensuing problems will also appear as increases in the incidence of other problems, directly but perhaps not provably owing to the impact of the welfare bill. There will be more malnutrition and more crime, increased infant mortality, and increased drug and alcohol abuse. There will be increased family violence and abuse against children and women, and a consequent significant spillover of the problem into the already overloaded child-welfare system and battered-women’s shelters.



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CAN THE WELFARE BILL BE FIXED THIS YEAR?

I AM amazed by the number of people who have bought the line that the bill was some little set of adjustments that could easily be done away with. Congress and the President have dynamited a structure that was in place for six decades. A solid bipartisan majority of Congress and the President himself have a stake in what they have already done. Fundamental change in the bill is therefore not possible this year. So the answer to the question is no, not in any fundamental way.

One possible area for adjustment is in the immigrant and food-stamp provisions. These occasioned the most hand-wringing from the President and some of the people who voted for the bill. They could be changed without redoing everything. The President has made some proposals for limited change on these items.

The bigger question is welfare. If there is going to be a short-term fix of the new law, it will be not in the fundamentals of the new structure but rather in some of the details. It might possibly include the following, although I hasten to say that even this list stretches credulity.

- *Jobs.* Congress could make extra funds available to the states for job creation, wage subsidies, training, placement, support and retention services, and so on. The President has proposed a fund of \$3 billion over three years for this kind of activity, saying it would result in a million new jobs. As campaign rhetoric, this was pure spin. It amounts to \$3,000 per job. There is simply no way in which \$3,000 per job will get a million jobs for people who have been on the welfare rolls for extended periods of time. The President has also proposed a modest additional tax credit for hiring welfare recipients. This, too, will have little practical effect.
- *Time limits.* The Democrats tried very hard to create a voucher covering basic necessities for children in families that had run up against the time limit. The idea failed by a narrow margin in the Senate, and is worth pursuing. Another item worth advocating would be raising the 20 percent exception to the time limit to 25 or even 30 percent.
- *Work requirements.* The states are chafing under the requirements about the percentage of the caseload that has to be participating in work or related activities. It would help a little if people were permitted to receive vocational training for longer than the twelve months the law allows.
- *Limits on state flexibility in the use of funds.* The law is excessively flexible on what the states can do with the block-grant funds. A number of possible changes would be helpful: reducing the percentage that can be transferred out of the block; raising the requirement for states' contributions of their own funds; requiring states to comply with the plans they adopt; requiring states to process applications for assistance expeditiously; and clarifying the procedural

protections for people denied or cut off from assistance.

- *Data.* It is vitally important that adequate data be gathered and reported on what happens under the new legislation. The new law contains some funding for research and some instructions about data to be gathered, but additional funds and specification would be helpful.

If reliable and affordable health care and child care were added to this list, and were available beyond a transitional period, it would help a lot. However, my crystal ball tells me that whatever is enacted in these areas will be modest at best, and the new structure will remain substantially in place. And of course not even these adjustments would solve the fundamental problems created when the previous structure was dynamited: the disappearance of the national definition of eligibility and of the guarantee that federal funds will be available for all eligible children.

WHAT WOULD A REAL FIX INVOLVE?

A REAL fix would involve, first, jobs, jobs, jobs—preferably and as a first priority in the private sector, but also in the public sector, where there is real work to be done. And then everything that enables people to be productive citizens. Schools that teach every child as well as they teach every other child. Safe neighborhoods. Healthy communities. Continuing health-care and day-care coverage, so that people can not only go to work but also keep on working. Ending the racial and ethnic discrimination that plagues too many young people who try to enter the job market for the first time.

When we discuss jobs, we need to be talking about opportunities for men and women both. That may seem obvious, but the welfare bill skews our focus. By allocating to long-term welfare recipients such a large share of the limited resources available for jobs and training, we may be draining funds and attention from others who deserve to be a higher priority. Inner-city young men come particularly to mind. We need to be promoting responsible fatherhood, marriage, and two-parent families. If young men cannot find work, they are far less likely to marry. They may have children, but economics and low self-esteem may defeat responsibility. Tough child-support enforcement is part of the solution, but genuine opportunity and clear pathways to opportunity are vital.

The outside world tends to believe that the inner city is hopeless. (I do not mean to neglect strategies to reduce rural poverty.) That is not the case. In the toughest neighborhoods, with all the dangers and pitfalls of street life, there are young people who beat the odds, stay in school and graduate, and go to college or get a job. These young people have exceptional strength and resiliency. But there are many more who could make it with a little extra support and attention. It is enormously important that we increase

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the number of young people who make it. We give a lot of lip service to prevention, whether of crime or drug abuse or teen pregnancy. But we will never prevent these negative outcomes as well as we could until we pursue a general strategy of creating opportunity and clear pathways to opportunity—a positive youth-development strategy.

Many of the jobs that welfare recipients and other low-income people get do not pay enough to pull them out of poverty. Continuing attention to the minimum wage and the Earned Income Tax Credit will be necessary. States should insist, as the city of Baltimore has, that all their contractors pay all their workers a sufficient wage to keep them out of poverty (or at least approximately enough to keep a family of four out of poverty), and should fund their contracts

accordingly. Current child-care and health-care policies are insufficient to allow low-wage workers to stay out of poverty even if transitional subsidies let them escape temporarily when they leave the welfare rolls. Federal and state child-care subsidies should help all workers who would otherwise be poor, not just those who have recently left the welfare rolls. And at the end of the day we still have 40 million Americans, including 10 million children, who do not have health coverage. We still have to deal with that as part of a real antipoverty strategy.

We have been reduced to the politics of the waitress mom. She says, all too legitimately, "I bust my tail. I don't have decent child care. I don't have health coverage. Why should 'these people' get what I don't have?" We started to bring greater equity to the working poor but, except for the recent minimum-wage increase, progress was halted by the 1994 congressional elections. A real fix would help the waitress mom as well as those a rung below her on the income ladder.

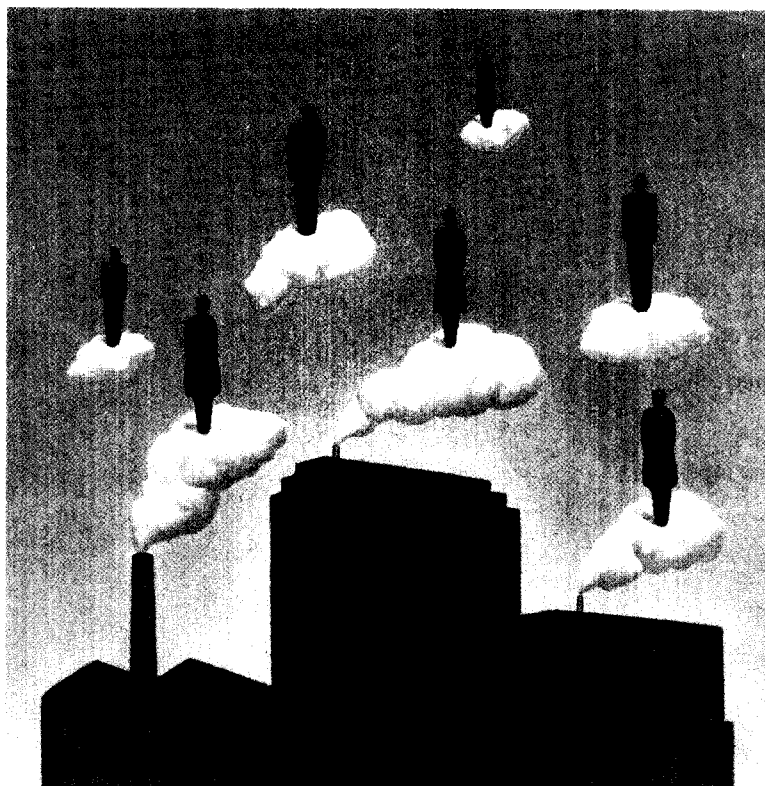
We are not just talking policy; we are talking values. We are talking people, especially young people growing up, who understand that they have to take responsibility for themselves, both as earners and as parents.

Personal responsibility and community responsibility need

to intersect. The community has a responsibility to help instill and nurture values. The community has a responsibility to offer support, especially to children and youths, so that everyone has an opportunity to acquire the tools necessary to achieve the personal responsibility that is such a vital element in the equation. The community has a responsibility

to help parents do their job. And community means something different from programs, something larger, although programs are part of the equation. Liberals have tended to think in terms of programs. The community's taking responsibility is a much larger idea. But communities cannot succeed in isolation. National leadership and policy are essential as well.

Welfare is what we do when everything else fails. It is what we do for people who can't make it after a genuine attempt



has been mounted to help the maximum possible number of people to make it. In fact, much of what we do in the name of welfare is more appropriately a subject for disability policy. The debate over welfare misses the point when all it seeks to do is tinker with welfare eligibility, requirements, and sanctions. The 1996 welfare law misses the point.

To do what needs to be done is going to take a lot of work—organizing, engaging in public education, broadening the base of people who believe that real action to reduce poverty and promote self-sufficiency in America is important and possible. We need to watch very carefully, and we need to document and publicize, the impact of the 1996 welfare legislation on children and families across America. We need to do everything we can to influence the choices the states have to make under the new law. We *can* ultimately come out in a better place. We should not want to go back to what we had. It was not good social policy. We want people to be able to hold up their heads and raise their children in dignity. The best that can be said about this terrible legislation is that perhaps we will learn from it and eventually arrive at a better approach. I am afraid, though, that along the way we will do some serious injury to American children, who should not have had to suffer from our national backlash. ☼



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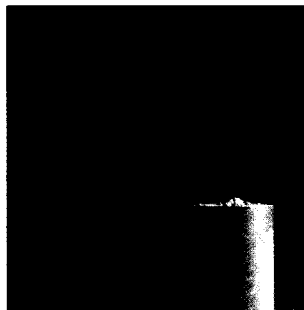


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A recent article in these pages argued that Thomas Jefferson was so deeply racist that he should be expelled from the American pantheon. But examining the problems this ambiguous figure poses for Americans reveals how the American principles of democracy and equality were entwined with the country's practice of slavery and racism, and helps to explain why America has had such difficulty creating an interracial society

What Jefferson Helps to Explain

by BENJAMIN SCHWARZ



ADMIRERS of Thomas Jefferson have long quoted his statement about black men and women that is inscribed on the Jefferson Memorial: "Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free." But they and the inscription, as Conor Cruise O'Brien pointed out in "Thomas Jefferson: Radical and Racist" (October, 1996, *Atlantic*), omit Jefferson's subsequent clause: "Nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government." Those who write about the troubling aspects of the



Jeffersonian heritage are often criticized as naively applying today's standards to the past. But critics of O'Brien's assessment of Jefferson should remember the deceptive inscription on the memorial. O'Brien is to a large extent reacting to a history of distortion by Jefferson hagiographers who have created a Jefferson to suit their purposes, applying their own contemporary standards while picking and choosing among Jefferson's words. Still, it is important to ask why the hagiographers have tried at best to excuse or at worst to sanitize Jefferson. The answer, of course, is that he is too valuable to lose. They want to enlist the man who wrote the Declaration of Independence on the side of racial tolerance—a value that, we believe, springs from the Declaration itself. What would it mean for America if its very inventor stood for the things that O'Brien reports?

As the controversy surrounding Jefferson shows, the most admirable and the most repulsive tendencies in our country are often rooted in the same soil. But the study of America's past shuns ambiguity. Most of those who write about American history can be divided into two camps. Those who follow the orthodox line tend toward the panegyric, celebrating

ican civil religion, which encompasses the other Founding Fathers, the Declaration (which O'Brien would divorce from its author), and the Constitution. Thus, like the panegyrists, whom he justifiably faults for removing Jefferson's troublesome racial views from their assessment of the man, O'Brien would sever America's inventor from his invention. With Jefferson removed, O'Brien's view of America's civil religion resembles the rosy picture painted by the panegyrists O'Brien criticizes.

Jefferson: Egalitarian and Anti-Capitalist

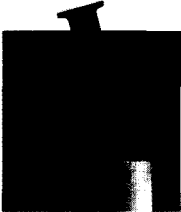
O'BRIEN'S call to eject Jefferson from the American pantheon is bad on two counts. First, O'Brien seems to assume that the worst parts of America's past are unconnected to the others. Second, he would deprive the United States of the figure central to what is singular and most admirable about the promise of American life—a promise that is already largely forgotten.

Although O'Brien is more accurate than not concerning

Jefferson's racial views, he misinterprets Jefferson's alarm over the power of the federal government. O'Brien's mistake threatens to vitiate the very aspects of the Jeffersonian heritage that Americans most sorely need. Jefferson's opinions on the authority of the federal government and on race, O'Brien maintains, are "the

two major factors" that warrant his expulsion from his "place . . . in the American civil religion." But O'Brien mistakenly conflates these issues, assuming that because the South opposed federal power in the Civil War and during the civil-rights crisis of the 1960s, there is a necessary connection between what is often called "states' rights" and those unsavory institutions slavery and segregation. He even argues that slavery was the real issue dividing Alexander Hamilton and his fellow Federalists from Jefferson and his allies, who were suspicious of growing federal strength.

Far from being an exclusively southern doctrine, however, states' rights also flourished in New England, and two U.S. Supreme Court justices from Pennsylvania were among its strongest constitutional defenders. Northern anti-slavery radicals used the doctrine to oppose the federal Fugitive Slave Law by arguing that returning slaves to the South was contrary to the moral norms of northern communities. In contrast, many slaveowners in the early nineteenth century defended a strong national government as the best bulwark against both slave revolts and the "leveling tendencies" of non-slaveholders.



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America's past, while revisionists excoriate it and condemn its exploitation of minorities and women. Neither approach leads to a subtle understanding of history. Both groups suppress interpretations that would undermine their own positions, and both have used Jefferson for their purposes. As O'Brien points out, panegyrists ignore or make lame excuses for those of Jefferson's utterances and acts that today seem racist. Revisionists just as avidly disregard evidence that would make Jefferson more complicated than the hypocritical racist they often present.

Surprisingly, O'Brien, in his article and in the book, *The Long Affair*, from which it was derived, combines the two approaches in his assessment of Jefferson. Like the revisionists, he attacks Jefferson for his racial views. But unlike the revisionists, who assert that America's racism and hypocrisy are Jefferson's writ large, O'Brien seems to perceive Jefferson virtually alone as embodying all that is unappealing in the nation's founding, and suggests that Jefferson be expelled from what he defines as the otherwise largely tolerant and liberal "official version" of the Amer-

Jefferson opposed the Federalist program not to support slavery but because he was a democrat. Indeed, as the historian Frank Owsley has argued, “Any believer . . . in the right of a people to govern themselves would naturally adhere in the early days of our history to the doctrine of State rights.” Some seventy years ago the progressive literary historian Vernon Parrington, in lamenting the association of localism with the support of slavery in the period leading up to the Civil War, explained that the preservation of democracy itself lay at the heart of anti-federalism.

That the principle of local self-government should have been committed to the cause of slavery, that it was loaded with an incubus certain to alienate the liberalism of the North, may be accounted one of the tragedies of American history. [The association of localism with the support of slavery] was disastrous to American democracy, for it removed the last brake on the movement of consolidation . . . surrendering the country to the principle of capitalistic exploitation. . . . The principle of democracy . . . received a staggering blow from the enlistment of northern liberalism under the banners of a consolidating nationalism.

In opposing the growing power of a centralized government dominated by big capital, Jefferson anticipated much in our political and economic system that we now regret. Commentators are concerned today about a widening gap between rich and poor, and the concentration of political and corporate power; Jefferson and his supporters argued long ago that the national state was in danger of becoming the creature and servant of an emerging national economic elite. Pundits complain that the United States has become merely a “procedural democracy”; Jefferson, understanding the difference between voters and citizens, feared a centralized government and economy exactly because they would deny citizens a rich political life. Whereas the left acquiesced to the wage system, confining its efforts to ensuring higher wages and generous social security, Jefferson insisted that the wage system itself was profoundly undemocratic and exploitative, by definition stripping workers of their economic independence. And whereas conservatives today simultaneously espouse the free market and “family” and “community” values, Jefferson dreaded capitalism precisely because it reduces individuals to abstractions—anonymous buyers and sellers whose claims on one another are determined solely by their capacity to pay. Human ties, he believed, bind men and women into communities.

It is thus surprising that Americans genuflect to Jefferson, because the political economy of corporate capitalism, which the United States has embraced since the late nineteenth century (when, as the historian Charles Beard has written, Jefferson’s America “had become a land of millionaires and the supreme direction of its economy had passed from the owners of farms and isolated plants and banks to a few men and institutions near the center of its life”), represents a repudia-

tion of his principles and the triumph of those of his political enemy, Hamilton. Indeed, as his detractors gloatingly point out, Jefferson is the great loser in American history.

The extent to which Jefferson is America’s rejected prophet is clear upon looking at his analysis of the relationship between economic and political life. His preferred course for America is often dismissed as backward-looking “agrarianism.” The true agrarians of Jefferson’s day advocated large-scale commercial farming—like the great plantations of Jefferson and his peers—as the kind that was most economically efficient; but Jefferson, deeming wealth second to other social ends, advocated the small family farm. His idealization of the virtuous “husbandman” and his belief that all (white) men should be given access to free land arose less from a romantic attachment to the soil than from his understanding of the central importance of economic independence and from his determination to thwart the development of a market-based society.

Jefferson replaced the timeless assumption that most men would labor in dependence on a few landowners, masters, and employers with the astonishing proposition that (white) men should control their own working lives. As long as these men had the option of making a living on their own farms, Jefferson reasoned, they could not be forced into an exploitative wage-labor relationship. Such independent citizens could participate directly in a political process based on local self-rule. Just as important, true community life could develop, because economically self-sufficient and roughly equal citizens would not need to pursue selfish interests at the expense of the common good. In other words, the economic system would not force people to “eat . . . one another.”

Jefferson’s vision of economic and participatory democracy, making “every citizen an acting member of government,” has appealed throughout American history to such eccentrics as Orestes Brownson, Walt Whitman, the nineteenth-century Populists, the Nashville Agrarians, and elements of the “old right” and the 1960s “new left.” Whether or not that vision was ever realistic, Jefferson was surely right that economic and political consolidation go hand in hand—and just as Hamilton intended, the national state has been governed by and for great wealth. Even ostensibly progressive measures are more accurately described by the historian Catherine McNicol Stock’s term “corporate-friendly liberalism.” Thus, for instance, federal farm programs—supposedly designed to support that bastion of Jeffersonian economic autonomy the family farm—have long channeled government support and loans disproportionately to the richest farmers, who have effectively become adjuncts to multinational agribusiness. If, as O’Brien urges, Jefferson is removed from the American pantheon, then we will have no figure to remind us of the democratic promise we lost in pursuing Hamilton’s vision. That Jefferson’s grand aspirations for what the Populists would later call a “cooperative com-

monwealth” today seem quaint and irrelevant, and that the militias are perhaps the only prominent political force in America that responds to Jefferson’s warnings about the consolidation of power, tell us less about Jefferson than about our own cramped hopes for democracy.

Picking and Choosing

HISTORY is not like a cluster of grapes from which the rotten ones can be neatly discarded. Failing to put Jefferson into a larger context by segregating Jefferson’s views from those he believes to be truly American, O’Brien misses the ways in which Jefferson’s ideas and opinions reflect broader problems in our past and are bound to our present.

While O’Brien censures Jefferson for his racism, he does not make enough of his slaveholding. In this he follows the current attitude: to ascribe too much significance to slaveholding is to risk being indicted for unsophisticated “presentism”—for condemning the Founders using a moral standard that did not exist in their time. This position too easily leads many commentators, including at times O’Brien, to treat slaveholding as if it were no more than a fashion of the times and therefore a relatively inconsequential aspect of the Founders’ lives. It considers the Founders essentially as twentieth-century liberals who happened to own slaves.

But it was inevitable that slaveholding would be ingrained in the Founders’ psychology and outlook, as Jefferson himself recognized in an often-quoted passage.

The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it. . . . If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self-love, for restraining the intemperance of passion towards his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present. But generally it is not sufficient. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to the worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances.

Not only was tyranny taught and encouraged in the home and even sanctioned by the state; it was, of course, necessary to sustain the institution of slavery. No doubt many contemporary readers are shocked by O’Brien’s revelation that Jefferson had his slaves flogged, and severely punished those who tried to run away. But readers’ surprise—and O’Brien’s indignation—is naive. How else could slaves be forced to work and prevented from fleeing? No matter what they accomplished of value, our country’s heroes who were slave-

holders subscribed to a system built on unlimited violence and were perforce willing to order that men and women be beaten, maimed, and even killed, as an 1829 decision by the North Carolina Supreme Court Judge Thomas Ruffin illustrated. Although admitting that his logic had horrible implications, Ruffin, with cold-eyed precision, demolished the argument that a master could be charged with assault on a slave.

The end [of slavery] is the profit of the master, his security and public safety; the subject, one doomed in his own person, and his posterity, to live without knowledge, and without the capacity to make anything his own, and to toil that another may reap the fruits. . . . such services can only be expected from one who has no will of his own; who surrenders his will in implicit obedience to that of another. Such obedience is the consequence only of uncontrolled authority over the body. There is nothing else which can operate to produce the effect. The power of the master must be absolute to render the submission of the slave perfect. I must freely confess my sense of the harshness of this proposition, I feel it as deeply as any man can. And as a principle of moral right, every person in his retirement must repudiate it. But in the actual condition of things, it must be so. There is no remedy. This discipline belongs to the state of slavery.

As slaveholders, then, George Washington, James Madison, Patrick Henry, John Marshall, and James Monroe, no less than Jefferson, belonged to, as one contemporary observer noted, “a very different race of men.”

Building Democracy on Slavery

PARADOXICALLY, the Founders would probably not have developed many of the ideas for which we most admire them were it not for their participation in the brutal reality of slavery. In *The Long Affair*, O’Brien prefaces his chapter on Jefferson’s racial views with a well-known quotation from Samuel Johnson. Johnson, who was hostile to the American Revolution, asked rhetorically and sarcastically, “How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty from the drivers of negroes?” Like many of the revisionist scholars he cites, O’Brien uses the quotation to bolster his argument that Jefferson was a hypocrite. Johnson, however, unintentionally put his finger on a crucial relationship.

Not only did a slaveholder draft the Declaration but a slaveholder—Madison—drafted the Bill of Rights and was the principal author of the Constitution. Americans elected slaveholders to the presidency for thirty-two of the first thirty-six years of that office’s history. Indeed, it is impossible to understand how the Founders conceived of liberty, equality, and self-government without reference to slavery, which deeply and disturbingly embedded itself in their consciousness. American revolutionaries voiced their determination

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not to become “slaves” of Britain: this topic, in fact, was the most frequent one in revolutionary discourse. Furthermore, Jefferson first proposed that the Great Seal of the new country depict “the children of Israel in the wilderness, led by a cloud by day and a pillar by night” (the same imagery, ironically, that black Americans applied to their own plight); he accepted Franklin’s alternative of Moses causing the waters to cover the Pharaoh and his chariots as they pursued their slaves. This made the analogy between white Americans and escaped slaves even clearer.

Many contemporary observers connected what Edmund Burke characterized as “a love of freedom” to an intimate familiarity with slavery. In 1775 Burke observed that “these people of the southern colonies are much more strongly attached to liberty, than those to the northward,” which he attributed to the southerners’ “vast multitude of slaves.” Slaveholders, Burke asserted, were “by far the most proud and jealous of their freedom.” Timothy Ford, a South Carolina lawyer, explained why. Liberty, he wrote,

is a principle which naturally and spontaneously contrasts with slavery. In no country on earth can the line of distinc-

his interpretation of the basis of American democracy and equality among whites is uncomfortably close to the truth.

Although Jeffersonians looked to a future America made up of small, self-sufficient farms, and Hamiltonians saw manufacturing towns, in fact one of the greatest sources of wealth in the Colonial period and in the first part of the nineteenth century was large-scale commercial agriculture. The great plantations, of course, depended on a tremendous labor force. At first this force had been composed mostly of indentured servants, who were poor, landless whites—a situation that replicated the problems of inequality and social control which had bedeviled England for centuries and had led to Bacon’s Rebellion, in Virginia, in 1676. English political thinkers were obsessed with the threat that an unruly and undisciplined lower class posed to republican government. In America, however, slavery solved this problem. When black slaves took the place of lower-caste whites, Americans achieved a society in which most of the poor were safely held in bondage. Thus Augustus John Foster, an early-nineteenth-century English diplomat, helped to answer Samuel Johnson’s query: Virginians, citizens of “the leading state in the

Union,” could “profess an unbounded love of liberty and of democracy in consequence of the mass of the people, who in other countries might become mobs, being there nearly altogether composed of their own Negro slaves.”

Furthermore, racism, as the historian Edmund Morgan argues, “became an es-

sentia, if unacknowledged, ingredient of [America’s] republican ideology.” The equality and unity of white Americans of different ethnic and religious backgrounds and classes were built largely on a common hatred and fear of black Americans. The Irish, for instance, who were initially regarded in this country as at best semi-barbarous, were able to gain a place in what was called the new “American race,” a melting pot of white men, by insisting on being recognized as “not black.” Even Abraham Lincoln had a dream for the United States that was at once egalitarian and tragically limited. It was to be a place where “white men may find a home . . . an outlet for free white people everywhere, the world over—in which Hans and Baptiste and Patrick . . . may . . . better their conditions in life.” An America that had originally thrown up a host of political and social distinctions based on birth and property became a far more open and egalitarian society for all those above the racial line. The same northern state constitutions that restricted black suffrage—regardless of property qualifications—expanded the suffrage to include propertyless whites. As W.E.B. Du Bois



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tion ever be marked so boldly. . . . Here there is a standing subject of comparison, which must be ever perfect and ever obvious. . . . The constant example of slavery stimulates a free man to avoid being confounded with the blacks. . . . slavery, so far from being inconsistent, has, in fact, a tendency to stimulate and perpetuate the spirit of liberty.

Knowing full well what they had done to Africans by enslaving them, America’s revolutionaries would not permit the same to be done to themselves in any form.

Slavery not only induced Americans to embrace liberty ardently but also nourished the American notion of democracy, while racism encouraged equality among whites, an unpopular idea on the Continent. In 1860 the Alabama statesman William L. Yancey matter-of-factly explained the foundations of American democracy to a northern audience. “Your fathers and my fathers,” he said, “built this government on two ideas: the first is that the white race is the citizen, and the master race, and the white man is the equal of every other white man. The second idea is that the Negro is the inferior race.” Yancey’s remarks strike us today as outrageous, but



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wrote, even the most economically exploited whites were “compensated in part by a . . . public and psychological wage. . . . because they were white.”

The troublesome response to Samuel Johnson’s question is not that there was a gross inconsistency between principles and practice; rather, in many ways it was the practice that made the principles possible.

Insuperable Prejudice

IF Jefferson diverged from the mainstream in stating a belief in the inherent intellectual inferiority of blacks, as O’Brien correctly argues, he was much more in line with contemporary thought in his fear of blacks as alien and dangerous. To Jefferson, blacks were crudely sexual creatures, and he presented as a fact, requiring no evidence or support, their sexual preference for whites, which was as great as that of “the Oranootan for the black woman over those of his own species.” Such fears, which led Jefferson to argue that the freed slave had to be literally “removed beyond the reach of mixture” or he would soon be “staining the blood of his master,” seem to have formed the core of the prejudice against blacks shared by nearly all white Americans.

As early as 1790 George Washington’s protégé Ferdinando Fairfax expressed what would prove to be the great obstacle in the minds of many whites to the emancipation of African-Americans and, later, to granting them full civil rights. Fairfax, who wrote the first detailed plan for the

emancipation and colonization of slaves, argued for the latter measure on the grounds that

there is something very repugnant to the general feelings even in the thought of their being allowed that free intercourse, and the privilege of intermarriage with the white inhabitants, which the other freemen of our country enjoy. . . . and as a proof, where is the man of all those who have liberated their slaves, who would marry a son or a daughter to one of them? and if *he* would not, who would?

These “prejudices, sentiments, or whatever they may be called,” Fairfax concluded, “would be found to operate so powerfully as to be insurmountable.”

Even if George Tucker, a Virginia intellectual, carefully demolished Jefferson’s arguments concerning blacks’ intellectual inferiority—demonstrating how they were inconsistent with logic and with Jefferson’s own beliefs—he nonetheless was as firmly convinced as Jefferson that blacks should be freed and removed from the United States. Emancipated blacks, he argued, “would never rest satisfied with any thing short of perfect equality”—which meant “amalgamating” blacks and whites, a fate to which, he held, whites would never accede.

What makes Jefferson abhorrent to O’Brien is not that he was a slaveholder but precisely this conviction that slaves should be both freed and expatriated. It would be comforting to characterize this belief, as O’Brien does, as “the Jeffersonian doctrine.” Jefferson, O’Brien insists, must be shunned because a multiracial society cannot embrace as a “prophet” a man who believed that free blacks had no place

A FLIGHT UP THE COAST

Sunlit inlets,
hot blinding gold
scintillations
gliding through tight-
stitched tapestries
of living green;
and skies azure
from one long out-
slung horizon
to the other,
ether without
flaw or tincture,
unshadowed and
unsoundable . . .

One might as well,
on such a day,
call this the Coast
of Anywhere—
some anyplace
plush, sumptuous,
underpeopled:
the jungly rim
of Sumatra
perhaps, the shores
of Honduras,
a littoral
Africa teemed
to the sea’s hem.

Underpeopled,
too, our little
twelve-seater, its
three passengers
neatly equal
to the flight crew.
Yes, we’re a sort
of family
circle—though one
whose hearth-fire is,
on such a day,
the globe itself—
with something of
a family’s

seasoned silence
(years behind us,
years to come). Why
breathe a word? What
experience
can life dispense
more delicious
than to gaze down
from Heaven toward
a world scarcely
recognized—ours
the rare vantage
of creatures both
lost and divine?

—BRAD LEITHAUSER

in America. But by this criterion virtually every major white political figure from the Revolution to the Civil War must also be denounced—including Madison, Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, Francis Scott Key, and Lincoln. Some of these men, like Jefferson, seem to have been personally repelled by the idea of admitting blacks to what was commonly called “the body of the people.” For others the motivation to expatriate African-Americans sprang not so much from a low view of blacks as from a low view of whites.

The colonization movement, which advocated transporting free blacks to Africa or elsewhere and which included many of the most distinguished statesmen of the early and mid nineteenth century, officially blamed what it called “invincible” white prejudice, rather than innate racial difference, for the “degradation” of free blacks in American society. Colonizationists pointed to the legal and social prohibitions that free blacks suffered in the supposedly enlightened North—where, as Alexis de Tocqueville observed, racial prejudice was in fact worse than in the South. In the North “free” blacks were barred from most schools and juries and could not attend white schools, worship at white churches, or labor in white workshops. They were banned from many public conveyances and forbidden to enter many lecture halls, libraries, and museums (and then were disparaged for failing to elevate themselves). The “horror” felt by whites at the “idea of an intimate union with the free blacks,” the Maryland colonizationist Robert G. Harper wrote despairingly in 1824, “precludes the possibility of such a state of equality, between them and us, as alone could make us one people.”

Using arguments strikingly similar to those of twentieth-century black nationalists, the Connecticut Colonization Society asserted in 1828, with resignation, that whites would never allow blacks to thrive in America: “The African in this country belongs by birth to the lowest station in society; and from that station he can never rise, be his talent, his enterprise, his virtues what they may.” Blacks would thus have to leave the United States if they wanted to claim their right to the pursuit of happiness. Although it is tempting to dismiss the colonizationists as unimaginative and trapped within the confines of their times, some of them—especially Madison, Clay, and Lincoln—are among the most politically imaginative Americans ever to have lived. They were forced to think deeply and deliberately, as statesmen rarely do, about the far future of their country. Knowing the enormous financial and moral cost of the course they proposed, they could nevertheless see no alternative. Indeed, what is most depressing about the colonizationists’ arguments is their prophetic understanding of the power and persistence of prejudice and of the damage it would inflict on the United States.

Whether whites could overcome this prejudice and achieve racial equality—not whether blacks’ capabilities were inferior—formed the crux of the argument between the

colonizationists and the abolitionists. Most abolitionists, as evangelical Christians, believed that people could be cleansed of their sins through direct access to God and hence “born again” into a life of holiness. Through Christianity, they held, white Americans could subdue their seemingly fixed and insurmountable racial fears and hatreds. Colonizationists were far more pessimistic. Lacking the abolitionist faith in a God that would transform the human heart, they were convinced that society did not have the power to change itself radically even if its course was morally wrong. “Is [prejudice] any less obstinate,” a prominent colonizationist asked, “because it is criminal?”

Colonizationists perceived that racial fear and hatred both damaged the people they were directed against and weakened society as a whole, by keeping the population from functioning cohesively. Madison was certain that a healthy society demanded the “complete incorporation” of blacks. But he could not see how such an ideal could be achieved, because he, too, was convinced that the “objections to a thorough incorporation of the two people are, with most of the whites, insuperable.” Anticipating the racial problems that would prevail for a century after emancipation—and that in important ways still exist today—Madison argued that if free blacks remained in America, the divided society that would result would never be at peace with itself.

If the blacks . . . be retained amid the whites, under the degrading privation of equal rights, political or social, they must be always dissatisfied with their condition, as a change only from one to another species of oppression; always secretly confederated against the ruling and privileged class; and always uncontrolled by some of the most cogent motives to moral and respectable conduct. . . . Nor is it fair, in estimating the danger of collisions with the whites, to charge it wholly on the side of the blacks. There would be reciprocal antipathies doubling the danger.

Tocqueville, in an assessment that could apply to much of modern America, concluded with despair that “the two races are fastened to each other without intermingling; and they are alike unable to separate entirely or combine.” He recognized this limbo to be “the most formidable of all the ills that threaten the future of the Union.”

America: As Much Black as White

IN what is perhaps the most famous definition of “American” ever written, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur simply defined African-Americans out of the American identity: “What then is the American, this new man? He is either an European, or the descendant of an European.” But in 1782, when Crèvecoeur, a French writer who had lived in the United States, wrote, African-Americans made up almost 20

percent of the U.S. population. Jefferson, Madison, and Lincoln all regarded blacks as a foreign element, but black Americans continually reminded the advocates of colonization, "This is our home and this is our country. Beneath its sod lie the bones of our fathers; for it some of them fought, bled, and died. Here we were born, and here we will die."

Jefferson, of all people, should have known how intimately and indelibly blacks had affected American life. His first memory, after all, was of being carried by a slave. Jefferson listed his slaves in his *Farm Book* as members of "my family"; some were literally related to him. His mulatto slave, Sally Hemings, whether or not she was his mistress, was his wife's half-sister. Monticello was always a black-and-white household. In a letter to his daughter in which he mentioned that her niece sent her love, he added, "She always counts you as the object of affection after her mama and uckin [Uncle] Juba." Uncle Juba, or Jupiter, was Jefferson's body servant, and the two had been together since Jefferson attended William and Mary. Jefferson obviously did not think it unnatural that his granddaughter loved this black man more than any other member of her "family" except her mother. In Jefferson's Virginia, the historian Mechal Sobel writes, "Blacks were holding white babies, giving them their first and most significant eye and body contact. They were physically caring for them and teaching them their first words. . . . They were their mummies, aunts, uncles, and playmates, as well as their servants. Their presence and influence were both physical and spiritual." Southern aristocrats' famous manners may have been learned from this close association with blacks. Slaves, often subject to arbitrary punishment, learned to be hypersensitive to other people's moods—a skill they passed on to the children in their care.

The Virginia that Jefferson knew was described by a contemporary as "New Guinea" because of its large population of African-Americans and the influence they exerted. African attitudes and casts of mind—aesthetics, perceptions of time, and, most important, approaches to religious experience—penetrated and altered the dominant English culture there. Significantly, Virginia was the largest and most populous colony and was the starting point of origin of many emigrants to the South, the West, and the Northwest. Thus Virginia's experience of blacks and whites sharing and molding a common culture greatly influenced American culture. Throughout American history whites learned an enormous amount from African-Americans in language, religion, storytelling, music, manners, and cuisine—so much so that, as Ralph Ellison recognized, "Most American whites are culturally part Negro American without even realizing it." What the writer James McBride Dabbs observed about fellow southerners in the mid twentieth century was just as true for Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and the other Virginians who, as a group, played the most prominent role in the United States' political life in its first three decades: "The

basic fact of our lives," Dabbs wrote, is that "the white Southerner is the man he is because he has lived among Negroes, and they are the people they are because they have lived with him."

America's Other Religion

A MORE widely used term to describe what O'Brien means by "the American civil religion" is what the Swedish sociologist and economist Gunnar Myrdal called "the American Creed": the ideals, enunciated chiefly in the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, of "the essential dignity of the individual human being, of the fundamental equality of all men, and of certain inalienable rights to freedom, justice, and a fair opportunity," which express the "essential meaning" of America. O'Brien maintains that these notions, which are basically the natural-rights philosophy of the American Revolution, form the primary "bonding force" that will increasingly be called on to unite blacks and whites. But the problem is that the creed has always been inadequate to this task.

The creed did, of course, influence attitudes about enslaving people. However instrumental slavery was in the development and acceptance of the creed, Americans recognized that the institution was theoretically inconsistent with such high-minded ideals. "If after we have made such a declaration to the world," a New Jersey man wrote in 1780 in a typical fit of self-criticism, "we continue to hold our fellow creatures in slavery, our words must rise up in judgement against us." Jefferson, Madison, and Lincoln—the authors of the primary texts of the American creed—all eloquently made the same argument. Jefferson, unlike many in the mid nineteenth century, scorned justifying slavery with his "scientific" racism. "Whatever be [blacks'] degree of talent it is no measure of their rights," he argued. "Because Sir Isaac Newton was superior to others in understanding, he was not therefore lord of the person or property of others." But these men, who believed that slavery and the American creed were antithetical, still could not conceive of, and had no interest in pursuing, the kind of bonding force between black and white Americans that O'Brien assigns to the American creed.

The creed, as they consistently held, commanded that America set its black inhabitants free. But it did not address what was, as Tocqueville discerned, and what remains the fundamental quandary of American life: it did not command white men and women to overcome the "permanent and insuperable" prejudice that Madison decried, and incorporate black men and women into "the body of the people." Whites in the northern states, after all, were true to the creed's refined and abstract theories of natural rights when they emancipated slaves, even as they daily provided incontrovertible proof of their hatred of blacks, their unwillingness to accept them as equals, and their refusal to face the reality that the

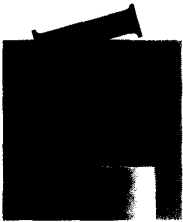
United States was indeed home to African-Americans. In short, the American creed, to reverse the plea of the abolitionists, demanded that the African-American be recognized as a man with certain elemental rights, but it did not—and does not—demand that he be treated as a brother.

The evangelical Christianity that persuaded abolitionists that blacks could be incorporated into American society because whites could be redeemed was alien to the Enlightenment philosophy of the American creed. Although Jefferson, Madison, and the other sophisticated aristocrats who formulated the creed were in many ways prophetic about the future course of America, they were—like today's political and cultural elites—temperamentally incapable of appreciating the power and potential of the evangelical forces set loose in their country. Jefferson predicted in 1822 that Unitarianism would become the American religion at the very moment when the country was undergoing the Second Great Awakening, in which evangelical Christianity permanently transformed it. Indeed, America's Founders were advocating a bland and neutral deism at what the historian Gordon Wood calls "the time of greatest religious chaos and originality in American

blacks and whites could never join together in society, Baptists and Methodists—black slaves and lower-class whites—were in fact trying to create an interracial society.

Jefferson's Virginia was undergoing a revolution of which he was oblivious. In a society stratified by rank, precedence, and racial caste, common people embraced evangelicalism, which allowed them to shape their culture and their spiritual life rather than be forced to depend on the mediations of political and religious elites. The churches that these early Baptists and Methodists formed were close-knit biracial communities. Often black church members outnumbered white members, and blacks preached to whites. (In fact, nearly a third of all Methodists in America in 1800 were black.) Blacks and whites embraced one another as "brothers" and "sisters" in Christ: being "born again" elevated all believers to a common level. In their churches blacks and whites testified and prayed together, were baptized in the same ceremonies, were held to the same moral expectations, and were buried in the same cemeteries. Just as important, this early interaction profoundly and permanently influenced the style and substance of southern evangelical Christianity. Even

though black and white churches separated after the Civil War, both continued to bear the stamp of early integration. Du Bois called the poor southern whites' church "a plain copy of Negro thought and methods." Today the "southern" evangelical churches throughout the country still possess that character.



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history." Methodist membership doubled during the decade in which Jefferson made his prediction; Baptist membership increased tenfold in the thirty years after the Revolution. Evangelical movements would eventually comprise two thirds of the Protestant ministers and church members in the United States—more than 35 percent of all Americans.

Thus the authors of the American creed were blind to the very bonding force that could potentially redeem America from the racial fear and hatred that they and the colonizationists believed to be insurmountable. Between the Revolution and the War of 1812 Virginians freed more slaves than they did at any other period before the Civil War. Although this might seem to point to the power of revolutionary ideology, historians in fact attribute these manumissions largely to the influence of evangelicalism, which characterized slavery not just as an abridgment of natural rights but also as a "horrid evil." Virginia's white evangelicals became convinced of the sinfulness of slavery because of the shared spiritual life of whites and blacks. Even if Jefferson, who represented the acme of political and cultural sophistication, believed that

As evangelicalism entered the mainstream of southern society, forces extrinsic to the church began to exert pressure. By the early 1800s white Baptists and Methodists had begun to beat a shameful retreat from their initial opposition to slavery and racism, as they accommodated themselves to society. Still, Christianity—not the "civil religion" of the Enlightenment—offered the best hope in America for what Tocqueville called the "intermingling" of blacks and whites. Christianity gave slaves—and, perhaps more important, the descendants of slaves—a way to live with whites without hating them. Christianity "curbed [slaves'] self-destructive tendency toward hatred. It left them free to hate slavery but not necessarily their individual masters," as the historian Eugene Genovese observes. "It left them free to love their masters as fellow sinners before God and yet to judge their relative merits as Christians and human beings." For all their compromises with the slave system, antebellum "white" evangelical churches in the South remained biracial. In a society that forbade blacks to testify against whites in courts of law, for instance, blacks' testimony in church was heard and

accepted and could even overrule whites'. In fact, as John Boles, perhaps the leading historian of southern religion, concludes, "in the churches slaves were treated more nearly as equals than anywhere else in the society."

Like the early Baptists and Methodists, black and white Pentecostals in the first decades of this century believed, as one observer who was first appalled and later inspired said, that the Holy Spirit had the power "to wash away the color line with the blood of the cross." Again, evangelical Christians were the only whites who as a group offered a biracial vision for America, however fleeting—a vision rooted in emotion and religious conviction rather than in progressive political reasoning.

Finally, of course, the civil-rights movement in the South of the 1950s and early 1960s took its inspiration, leadership, and rhetoric from evangelical Christianity. Its leaders recognized that the success would rest less on a change in the laws than on a change in the hearts of white southerners. Although northern liberals often saw this as an impossible—and irrelevant—goal, Martin Luther King Jr. always spoke of himself as a southerner, and wrote of "our beloved Southland." He recognized what the writer V. S. Naipaul, in his journey through the South in the mid-1980s, would call "the great discovery of my travels": "In no other part of the world had I found people so driven by the idea of good behavior and the good religious life. And that was true for black and white."

When southern whites' hearts did change, it was not because they recognized that they were in political error but because they had "learned to value blacks as a spiritual people too much," as the historian Joel Williamson writes. "Through the blacks they became their own accusers, and their guilt was all too clear. Christ would not do what they had done." The white civil-rights leader Leslie Dunbar described the civil-rights movement, the achievements of which are today regarded as a triumph of the "American creed," in terms that are antithetical to the Enlightenment heritage of that creed—as the product of "the characteristically theological cast of Southern thought," with its habit of "seeing all lives as under the judgment of God and of knowing, therefore, with certainty the transience of all works of men."

Amazing Grace

NINETY-FOUR years ago Du Bois asked white Americans,

Your country? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed we were here. Here we have brought our three gifts and mingled them with yours: a gift of story and song—soft, stirring melody in an ill-harmonized and unmelodious land; the gift of sweat and brawn to beat back the wilderness, conquer the soil, and lay the foundations of this vast economic empire . . . ; the third, a gift of

the Spirit. Around us the history of the land has centred for thrice a hundred years; . . . we have woven ourselves with the very warp and woof of this nation,—we fought their battles, shared their sorrow, mingled our blood with theirs, and generation after generation have pleaded with a head-strong, careless people to despise not Justice, Mercy, and Truth, lest the nation be smitten with a curse. Our song, our toil, our cheer, and warning have been given to this nation in blood-brotherhood. Are not these gifts worth the giving? Is not this work and striving? Would America have been America without her Negro people?

In the face of this ongoing and inevitable kinship the struggle, exemplified by Jefferson, to assert the separateness of blacks and whites—an idea that has appealed to members of both races—is, as Ralph Ellison wrote, a persistent "national pathology." However admirable and valuable, the American creed has proved woefully insufficient in curing that pathology. Political principles have not been able to make black and white Americans truly one people; they cannot wash away the color line, which remains the fundamental and most obdurate problem of American life.

Jefferson's elegant and often abstract Declaration of Independence is, as O'Brien recognizes, a sacred text in America's civil religion. But if we are to overcome our national pathology, perhaps we must look to a simpler text. "Amazing Grace," whose tune is based on an American folk melody, was written in England in 1779, but it is not a popular hymn there. It is, however, beloved in this country and has permeated the culture; as with the Declaration, most Americans know its gist. The hymn and the story of its creation both attest to a characteristically American notion—the possibility of emotional and spiritual transformation. The author, John Newton, was the captain of a slave ship who forsook the slave trade for the ministry after God instigated a "great change" within him. The song's message—that man is essentially wretched and powerless to effect his own redemption, but with God all things are possible—neatly reflects the stark yet ultimately hopeful tenets of evangelicalism, arguably the quintessential American religious experience. As such, it also embodies the creed enunciated by the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, which promised that black and white America could become one people: "There *is* power enough in the religion of Jesus Christ to melt down the most stubborn prejudices, to overthrow the highest walls of partition, to break the strongest caste . . . to unite in fellowship the most hostile, and to equalize and bless all its recipients."

The unyielding national pathology that Ellison described, often equated with America's original sin, has been remarkably impervious to the works of man. If America is to reach the Promised Land to which King gave imperishable expression, then the creed embodied in the Declaration may be of less use than the creed embodied in "Amazing Grace." ❧

WHOSE RIGHT TO DIE?

by EZEKIEL EMANUEL



*America should think again before pressing ahead with the
legalization of physician-assisted suicide
and voluntary euthanasia*

THE debate over physician-assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia will soon reach its most important stage in this country. Last spring the Second and Ninth Circuit Courts of Appeals handed down momentous decisions striking down state laws in New York and Washington that forbid physician-assisted suicide. Although the Second and Ninth Circuit Court cases focus on physician-

assisted suicide, and although there are important differences between physician-assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia, the legal reasoning that would justify physician-assisted suicide would almost certainly extend to voluntary euthanasia. The intensity of the debate on both issues will grow during the wait for rulings this year by the Supreme Court, which has accepted

the two circuit-court cases for review.

In physician-assisted suicide a doctor supplies a death-causing means, such as barbiturates, but the patient performs the act that brings about death. In voluntary euthanasia the physician performs the death-causing act after determining that the patient indeed wishes to end his or her life. Neither term applies to a patient's refusal of life-support

technology, such as a respirator or artificial nutrition, or a patient's request that it be withdrawn; these have had ethical and constitutional sanction nationwide for years. And neither term applies to what is sometimes called indirect euthanasia, when the administration of drugs primarily for pain relief may have the secondary effect of causing death, as the physician is

well aware. This practice, too, is ethically and legally sanctioned.

In formulating their decisions the circuit-court judges made a number of assumptions about the actual or likely circumstances surrounding cases of death by active intervention. Their judgments are based on misreadings of history, misinterpretations of survey data, mistaken reasoning, and simple misinformation.

Myth No. 1: It is primarily advances in biomedical technology—especially life-sustaining technology—that have created unprecedented public interest in physician-assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia. “The emergent right to receive medical assistance in hastening one’s death [is an] inevitable consequence of changes in the causes of death, advances in medical science, and the development of new technologies. Both the need and the capability to assist individuals [to] end their lives in peace and dignity have increased exponentially” (Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals).

Physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia have been profound ethical issues confronting doctors since the birth of Western medicine, more than 2,000 years ago. All the arguments made today to justify—or condemn—the two practices were articulated before any modern biomedical technology existed. The ancient Hippocratic Oath enjoins physicians to “neither give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it, nor make a suggestion to this effect.” The oath was written at a time when physicians commonly provided euthanasia and assisted suicide for ailments ranging from foot infections and gallstones to cancer and senility. Indeed, the Hippocratic Oath represented the *minority* view in a debate within the ancient Greek medical community over the ethics of euthanasia.

Even in America legalized euthanasia, rather than being a new issue, has been publicly debated and rejected—a fact the courts failed to mention. Modern interest in euthanasia in the United States began in 1870, when a commentator, Samuel Williams, proposed to the Birmingham Speculative Club that eu-

thanasia be permitted “in all cases of hopeless and painful illness” to bring about “a quick and painless death.” The word “painless” is important: the idea of euthanasia began gaining ground in modern times not because of new technologies for agonizingly prolonging life but because of the discovery of new drugs, such as morphine and various anesthetics for the relief of pain, that could also painlessly induce death. Over the next three decades Williams’s proposal was reprinted in popular magazines and books, discussed in the pages of prominent literary and political journals, and debated at the meetings of American medical societies and nonmedical professional associations. The debate culminated in 1906, after the Ohio legislature took up “An Act Concerning Administration of Drugs etc. to Mortally Injured and Diseased Persons”—a bill to legalize euthanasia. The merits of the act were debated for months and were covered extensively in the pages of *The New York Times*, which vigorously opposed legalization, and in medical journals. The Ohio legislature overwhelmingly rejected the bill, effectively ending that chapter of the euthanasia debate.

Thus, decades before the discovery of penicillin (1928) and the development of mechanical respirators (1929), dialysis (1945), and other life-sustaining technologies, serious public discussions of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia took place in the United States (and also in European countries). These discussions were couched in the same language we use today—“patients’ rights,” “the relief of pain and suffering,” “the loss of dignity.”

Indeed, rather than creating a perceived need for physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia, advances in life-sustaining technology should help to obviate them. Patients who are being kept alive by technology and want to end their lives already have a recognized constitutional right to stop any and all medical interventions, from respirators to antibiotics. They do not need physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia.

Myth No. 2: Legalizing physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia is widely endorsed. “There is unquestionably growing popular support for permitting doctors to provide assistance to terminally ill patients who wish to hasten their deaths” (Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals).

Yes, polls show that a majority of Americans support physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia—indeed, have supported legalizing them for almost twenty-five years. But the support is neither strong nor deep. Careful analysis of the polling data suggests that there is a “rule of thirds”: a third of Americans support legalization under a wide variety of circumstances; a third oppose it under any circumstances; and a third support it in a few cases but oppose it in most circumstances.

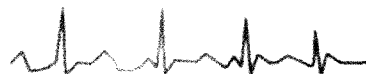
Americans tend to endorse the use of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia when the question is abstract and hypothetical. One formulation that has been used for almost fifty years and elicits widespread agreement is “When a person has a disease that cannot be cured, do you think doctors should be allowed by law to end the patient’s life if the patient and his or her family request it?” The question has several flaws, the most important one being that “to end the patient’s life” is vague and specific neither to physician-assisted suicide nor to euthanasia. The phrase could mean simply stopping life-sustaining technologies that are keeping the patient alive, which is already legal.

Other, more carefully designed questions can elicit majority support for physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia, but only when patients are described as terminally ill *and* experiencing unremitting physical pain. Support dwindles when the public is asked about physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia in virtually any other situation. Two thirds of Americans oppose physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia when a terminally ill patient has no pain but wants to die because of concern about being a burden to his or her family, or because he or she finds a drawn-out dying process meaningless.

The most accurate characterization of the survey data is that a significant majority of Americans oppose physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia *except* in the limited case of a terminally ill patient with uncontrollable pain.

Myth No. 3: It is terminally ill patients with uncontrollable pain who are most likely to be interested in physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia. "In the case of a terminally ill adult who ends his life in the final stages of an incurable and painful degenerative disease, in order to avoid debilitating pain and a humiliating death, the decision to commit suicide is not senseless, and death does not come too early" (Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals).

The empirical studies of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia in the Netherlands (where the practices have long been accepted), the United States, and elsewhere indicate that pain plays a minor role in motivating



requests for the procedures. A 1996 update of the comprehensive and rigorous 1991 Remmelink Report on euthanasia practices in the Netherlands revealed that in only 32 percent of all cases did pain play any role in requests for euthanasia; indeed, pain was the sole reason for requesting euthanasia in no cases. A study of patients in nursing homes in the Netherlands revealed that pain was among the reasons for requesting physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia in only 29 percent of cases and was the main reason in only 11 percent. A study of physicians in Washington State who admitted to having received requests for physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia revealed that severe pain played a role in only about a third of the requests. A study of HIV-infected patients in New York found that interest in physician-assisted suicide was not associated with patients' experiencing pain or with pain-related limitations on function. My own recent study of

cancer patients, conducted in Boston, reveals that those with pain are more likely than others to oppose physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia. These patients are also more likely to say that they would ask to change doctors if their attending physician indicated that he or she had performed physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia. No study has ever shown that pain plays a major role in motivating patient requests for physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia.

What does motivate requests? According to studies, depression and general psychological distress. The Remmelink Report found that among Dutch patients the leading reason for requesting euthanasia was a perceived loss of dignity. The study of Washington State physicians found that the leading factors

THE PERSISTENCE OF ABUSE AND THE VIOLATION OF SAFEGUARDS IN THE NETHERLANDS, IN SPITE OF ATTENDANT PUBLICITY AND CONDEMNATION, SUGGEST THAT THE FEARED CONSEQUENCES OF THE LEGALIZATION OF EUTHANASIA ARE EXACTLY ITS INHERENT CONSEQUENCES.

driving requests were fear of a loss of control or of dignity, of being a burden, and of being dependent. Among the New York HIV-infected patients the leading factors were depression, hopelessness, and having few—and poor-quality—social supports. In my own study, patients who were depressed were most likely to discuss euthanasia seriously, to hoard drugs for suicide, and to have read *Final Exit*, the Hemlock Society suicide manual.

These studies highlight an important conflict between people's actual attitudes and likely medical practice. Many Americans say they would support physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia for patients in pain; they oppose the practices for patients who worry about being a burden, about

life's being meaningless, about hopelessness. But patients with depression and psychological distress are most likely to request death; patients in pain are less likely to request it.

Myth No. 4: The experience with euthanasia in the Netherlands shows that permitting physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia will not eventually get out of hand. "There is no reason to believe that legalizing assisted suicide will lead to the horrific consequences its opponents suggest" (Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals).

The slippery slope feared by opponents and supporters alike is the route from physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia for terminally ill but competent adults to euthanasia for patients who cannot give consent: the unconscious, the demented, the mentally ill, and children. Because the Netherlands is the one developed democracy that has experience with sanctioned euthanasia,



advocates and adversaries alike invoke it to defend their points of view. What does the Dutch experience actually show?

Contemporary Dutch policy regarding voluntary euthanasia had its origins in 1973, with the case of a physician, Geertruida Postma, who injected a deaf, partially paralyzed seventy-eight-year-old woman with morphine, ending her life. The patient happened to be Postma's mother. Postma was convicted of murder but given a suspended sentence of one week in jail and one year on probation, a sentence that effectively exonerated her. A subsequent case in 1981 resulted in an agreement between Dutch prosecutors and the Royal Dutch Medical Society, under the terms of which physicians who participated in physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia would not be prosecuted for murder if they adhered to certain guidelines. The main guidelines, parts of which have been incorporated into proposals for outright legalization in other countries, are

that 1) the patient must make an informed, free, and explicit request for physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia, and the request must be repeated over time; 2) the patient must be experiencing unbearable suffering—physical or psychological—that cannot be relieved by any intervention except physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia; 3) the attending physician must have a consultation with a second, independent physician to confirm that the case is appropriate for physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia; and 4) the physician must report the facts of the case to the coroner, as part of a notification procedure developed to permit investigation and to ensure that the guidelines have been followed.

It is important to recognize that despite a widespread perception to the contrary, euthanasia has not been legalized under the Dutch penal code—it remains a crime, albeit one that will not be prosecuted if performed in accordance with the guidelines. Several recent efforts in the Netherlands to overtly legalize physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia have been defeated, primarily because of opposition from Dutch religious authorities. The Dutch rules differ from what U.S. proposals (such as those embodied in a 1994 Oregon measure on physician-assisted suicide, still in the courts) would require in the following respects: they do not stipulate that a patient must be terminally ill, and they do not require that a patient be experiencing *physical* pain or suffering—a patient can be experiencing psychological suffering only.

Not until 1990, a decade after the Dutch rules were promulgated, was the comprehensive and reliable empirical study done of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia in the Netherlands which resulted in the Remmelink Report. The recent update of this report reveals that of about 9,700 requests for physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia made each year in the Netherlands, about 3,600 are acceded to, accounting for 2.7 percent of all deaths in the Netherlands (2.3 percent from euthanasia, 0.4 percent from physician-assisted suicide). Nearly 80 percent of patients who undergo physi-

cian-assisted suicide or euthanasia have cancer, with just four percent having neurological conditions such as Lou Gehrig's disease or multiple sclerosis. The report revealed that 53 percent of the Dutch physicians interviewed had participated in physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia at some point in their

career; 29 percent had participated within the previous two years. Only 12 percent of the Dutch doctors categorically refused to participate in physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia, most likely for religious reasons.

The 1996 data show small increases in the numbers of requests for physi-



cian-assisted suicide and euthanasia since 1990, but the overall changes are undramatic. The new research does indicate, however, that problems identified by the Rummelink Report have by no means been eliminated.

First, the update found that beyond the roughly 3,600 cases of physician-as-

sisted suicide and euthanasia reported in a given year, there are about 1,000 instances of nonvoluntary euthanasia. Most frequently, patients who were no longer competent were given euthanasia even though they could not have freely, explicitly, and repeatedly requested it. Before becoming unconscious or men-

tally incompetent about half these patients did discuss or express a wish for euthanasia; nevertheless, they were unable to reaffirm their wishes when the euthanasia was performed. Similarly, a study of nursing-home patients found that in only 41 percent of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia cases did doctors adhere to all the guidelines. Although most of the violations were minor (usually deviations in the notification procedure), in 15 percent of cases the patient did not initiate the request for physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia; in 15 percent there was no consultation with a second physician; in seven percent no more than one day elapsed between the first request and the actual physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia, violating the guideline calling for repeated requests; and in nine percent interventions other than physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia could have been tried to relieve the patient's suffering.

Second, euthanasia of newborns has been acknowledged. The reported cases have involved babies suffering from well-recognized fatal or severely disabling defects, though the babies were not in fact dying. Precisely how many cases have occurred is not known. One estimate is that ten to fifteen such cases occur each year. Whether ethically justified or not, providing euthanasia to newborns (upon parental request) is not voluntary euthanasia and does constitute a kind of "mercy killing."

The Netherlands studies fail to demonstrate that permitting physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia will not lead to the nonvoluntary euthanasia of children, the demented, the mentally ill, the old, and others. Indeed, the persistence of abuse and the violation of safeguards, despite publicity and condemnation, suggest that the feared consequences of legalization are exactly its inherent consequences.

Third, the Boudewijn Chabot case raises a warning flag. Chabot, a psychiatrist, participated in the suicide of a depressed fifty-year-old woman in 1991. Her first son had committed suicide a few years earlier. Then her father had died. Under the stress her marriage



dissolved. In May of 1991 her second son died of cancer, and less than three months later the woman reached Chabot through the Dutch Voluntary Euthanasia Society, seeking someone to help her end her life. She refused antidepressants and additional psychotherapy. She was never seen by another physician in consultation. When Chabot discussed the case with seven colleagues, at least two suggested that he not assist in the suicide. The Dutch Supreme Court ultimately opted not to penalize Chabot, reaffirming the permissibility of providing assisted suicide and euthanasia on grounds of mental suffering alone. The Amsterdam Medical Disciplinary College did reprimand him, however.

A statement by Else Borst-Eilers, the Dutch Minister of Health, raises concerns about how euthanasia will come to be viewed once it is routine: "There are situations in which the best way to heal the patient is to help him die peacefully, and the doctor who in



such a situation grants the patient's request acts as the healer *par excellence*." The logic of understanding voluntary euthanasia as "healing" begins to justify using euthanasia for children, the incompetent, the mentally ill, and others who are suffering or who we imagine are suffering in some fashion. As we have seen, there is a very strong tendency among people who are healthy to extrapolate from the suffering of others in ways that those who are in fact suffering would not countenance.

Many in favor of legalization urge caution in applying the experience of the Netherlands to the United States, citing the many significant geographic, cultural, and political differences between the countries. The differences suggest, though, that the kinds of departures from agreed-upon procedures that have occurred in the Netherlands are likely to be even more commonplace in America. Whatever the emerging cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity of the Nether-

lands, it pales in comparison to the raucous diversity of the United States. And the Dutch have relative income equality, whereas income inequality in the United States is among the greatest in the developed world. Such diversity and inequality make it harder to share norms and to enforce them. The Dutch are also a law-abiding people who view government social supports, interventions, and regulations as legitimate. America is a land founded on opposition to government, where candidates for office campaign against government legitimacy. If the law-abiding Dutch violate their own euthanasia safeguards, what can we expect of Americans?

In the Netherlands physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia are provided in the context of universal and compre-

between pain and such interventions. As an oncologist I have often personally cared for patients who suffer despite all available treatment. Only the callous and insensitive would deny that in such cases physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia can offer obvious benefits—can end a life that is worse than death.

But these cases distort the picture. The question is not about whether intervention is right for this or that particular patient. In any given case it may be the ethical thing to do, whatever the law says—and should be done. The question confronting the United States is one of policy: Should we broadly legalize physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia? We must not be swayed by a few—or even a few thousand—wrenching cases in which such intervention seems unequivocally right.

Most of the patients interested in physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia will not be suffering horrific pain. As noted, depression, hopelessness, and psy-



chological distress are the primary factors motivating the great majority. Should their wishes be granted? Our usual approach to people who try to end their lives for reasons of depression and psychological distress is psychiatric intervention—not giving them a syringe and life-ending drugs.

Legalizing physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia, some argue, would not benefit only those who eventually made use of these procedures; it would also provide "psychological comfort" or "reassurance" to millions of other Americans, who would know that if they were dying and things got really bad, they could end their lives. However, the one study we have—the Boston study mentioned previously—shows that for every cancer patient who is likely to be reassured by a discussion of physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia, another patient finds that such a discussion would decrease his or her trust in the care being provided.

ENDING A LIFE BY PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE OR EUTHANASIA IS AN EXTRAORDINARY AND GRAVE EVENT. LEGALIZATION WOULD TRANSFORM THESE PRACTICES INTO ROUTINE INTERVENTIONS THAT CAN BE ADMINISTERED WITHOUT THE NEED FOR A PUBLICLY ACCEPTABLE JUSTIFICATION.

hensive health care. The United States has yet to provide such coverage, and leaves tens of millions effectively without health care. Paul van der Maas, the professor of public health who conducted the two Netherlands studies, has said that in the absence of health-care coverage he would be loath to permit euthanasia in the Netherlands, fearing that pressure might be brought to bear on patients and doctors to save money rather than to help patients.

WHAT, then, should be U.S. policy regarding physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia? Magazine and television stories about patients who want to end their suffering by means of physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia help to reinforce the seemingly inherent link

Whatever the benefits of legalized physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia, they must be measured against the dangers of legalization. In considering dangers we must consider more than potential violations of safeguards, although the Dutch experience indicates that the danger is real. (It is hardly surprising that, according to surveys, those who are most opposed to physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia include those most likely to experience abuse and coercion: the old, the less well off, and minorities.) For instance, how would legalization affect our society's already tenuous commitment to providing quality health care for the millions of people who die every year?

Providing the terminally ill with compassionate care and dignity is very hard work. It frequently requires monitoring and adjusting pain medications, the onerous and thankless task of cleaning people who cannot control their bladders and bowels, and feeding and dressing people when their every movement is painful or difficult. It may require agonizing talks with dying family members about their fears, their reflections on life and what comes after, their family loves and family antagonisms. Ending a patient's life by injection, with the added solace that it will be quick and painless, is much easier than this constant physical and emotional care. If there is a way to avoid all this hard work, it becomes difficult not to use it.

Broad legalization of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia would have the paradoxical effect of making patients seem to be responsible for their own suffering. Rather than being seen primarily as the victims of pain and suffering caused by disease, patients would be seen as having the power to end their suffering by agreeing to an injection or taking some pills; refusing would mean that living through the pain was the patient's decision, the patient's responsibility. Placing the blame on the patient would reduce the motivation of caregivers to provide the extra care that might be required, and would ease guilt if the care

fell short. Such an easy, thoughtless shift of responsibility is probably what makes most hospice workers so deeply opposed to physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia.

There is one final matter to consider: the possibility that euthanasia not only would be performed on incompetent patients in violation of the rules—as an abuse of the safeguards—but would become the rule in the context of demographic and budgetary pressures on Social Security and Medicare as the Baby Boom generation begins to retire, around 2010.

Once legalized, physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia would become routine. Over time doctors would become comfortable giving injections to end life and Americans would become comfortable having euthanasia as an option. Comfort would make us want to extend the option to others who, in society's view, are suffering and leading purposeless lives. The ethical arguments for physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia, advocates of euthanasia have maintained, do not apply to euthanasia only when it is voluntary; they can also be used to justify some kinds of nonvoluntary euthanasia of the incompetent. Euthanasia would come to be seen as "one end of a spectrum of caring for dying patients," as the philosopher and euthanasia defender Dan Brock writes. "When viewed in this way," he goes on, "it will be difficult to deny euthanasia to a patient for whom it is seen as the best or most appropriate form of care simply because that patient is now incompetent and cannot request it."

Advocates of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia urge legalization for reasons of compassion, but there is no guarantee that the reasons offered in 1997 would remain the justification even a few years ahead, under different social and economic circumstances. The confluence of ethical arguments, medical practice, demographic and budgetary pressures, and a social ethos that views the old and sick as burdens would seem capable of overwhelming any barriers against euthanasia for incompetent patients.

THE proper policy, in my view, should be to affirm the status of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia as *illegal*. In so doing we would affirm that as a society we condemn ending a patient's life and do not consider that to have one's life ended by a doctor is a right. This does not mean we deny that in exceptional cases interventions are appropriate, as acts of desperation when all other elements of treatment—all medications, surgical procedures, psychotherapy, spiritual care, and so on—have been tried. Physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia should not be performed simply because a patient is depressed, tired of life, worried about being a burden, or worried about being dependent. All these may be signs that not every effort has yet been made.

By establishing a social policy that keeps physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia illegal but recognizes exceptions, we would adopt the correct moral view: the onus of proving that everything had been tried and that the motivation and rationale were convincing would rest on those who wanted to end a life. Such a policy would recognize that ending a life by physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia is an extraordinary and grave event. To recognize a legal right to physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia transforms the practices into routine interventions that can be administered without the need for a publicly acceptable justification. Doctors who end patients' lives would no longer bear the burden of having to prove the appropriateness of their action, if called upon to do so, but could simply justify their action as a legally sanctioned procedure.

Advocates for legalization might find a policy that permits exceptions to embody a double standard. But crafting a social policy in this way would also embody what we know: not all cases are the same, and among the millions of Americans who die each year there are morally relevant differences that cannot be captured in an inflexible rule. We must ensure that moral judgments are made in individual cases, and that those who make them will be accountable before the law. ☪

Welding With Children

by TIM GAUTREAUX

TUESDAY was about typical. My four daughters—not one of them married, you understand—brought over their kids, one each, and explained to my wife how much fun she was going to have looking after them again. But Tuesday was her day to go to

the casino, so guess who got to tend the four babies. My oldest daughter also brought over a bed rail that the end broke off of. She wanted me to weld it. Now, what the hell you can do in a bed that'll cause the end of a iron rail to break off is beyond me, but she can't afford another one on her burger-flipping salary, she said, so I got to fix it with four little kids hanging on my coveralls. Her boy is seven months, nicknamed Nu-Nu, a big-headed baby with a bubbling tongue always hanging out of his mouth. My second oldest, a flight attendant on some propeller airline out of Alexandria, has a little six-year-old girl named Moonbean, and that ain't no nickname. My third daughter, who is still dating, dropped off Tammynette, also six. Last to come was Freddie—my favorite, because he looks like those old photographs of me when I was seven. He has a round head with copper bristle for hair, cut about as short as Velcro. He's got that kind of papery skin, like me, but it's splashed with a handful of freckles.

When everybody was on deck, I put the three oldest in front of the TV and rocked Nu-Nu to sleep before dropping him in the port-a-crib. Then I dragged the bed rail and the three awake kids out through the trees, back to my tin workshop. I tried to get something done, but Tammynette got the big grinder turned on and jammed a file against the

He was just one old man
with a little brown book of Bible stories.
How could he compete with MTV,
the Playboy Channel, and rental movies
where people kill each other
with no more thought than it would
take to swat a fly?

stone just to laugh at the sparks. I got the thing unplugged and then started to work, but when I was setting the bed rail in the vise and clamping on the ground wire from the welding machine, I leaned against the iron and Moonbean picked the electric rod holder off

the cracker box and struck a blue arc on the zipper of my coveralls, low. I jumped back like I was hit with religion and tore those coveralls off and shook the sparks out of my drawers. Moonbean opened her goat eyes wide and sang, "Whoo. Grendaddy can bust a move." I decided I better hold off trying to weld with little kids around.

I herded them into the yard to play, but even though I got three acres, there ain't much for them to do at my place, so I sat down and watched Freddie climb on a Oldsmobile engine I got hanging from a willow oak on a long chain. Tammynette and Moonbean pushed him like he was on a swing, and I yelled at them to stop, but they wouldn't listen. It was a sad sight, I guess. I shouldn't have had that greasy old engine hanging from a Kmart chain in my side yard. I knew better. Even in this central-Louisiana town of Gumwood, which is just like any other red-dirt place in the South, trash in the yard is trash in the yard. I make decent money as a now-and-then welder.

I think sometimes about how I even went to college once. I went a whole semester to LSU. Worked overtime at a sawmill for a year to afford the tuition and showed up in my work boots to be taught English 101 by a black guy from Pakistan who couldn't understand one word we said, much less us him. He didn't teach me a damn thing and

would sit on the desk with his legs crossed and tell us to write nonstop in what he called our portfolios, which he never read. For all I know, he sent our papers back to Pakistan for his relatives to use as stove fuel.

The algebra teacher talked to us with his eyes rolled up like his lecture was printed out on the ceiling. Most of the time he didn't even know we were in the room, and for a month I thought the poor bastard was stone blind. I never once solved for X.

The chemistry professor was a fat drunk who heated Campbell's soup on one of those little burners and ate it out of the can while he talked. There was about a thousand of us in that classroom, and I couldn't figure out what he wanted us to do with the numbers and names. I sat way in the back, next to some fraternity boys who called me Uncle Jed. Time or two, when I could see the blackboard off on the horizon, I almost got the hang of something, and I was glad of that.

I kind of liked the history professor, and learned to write down a lot of what he said, but he dropped dead one hot afternoon in the middle of the pyramids and was replaced by a little porch lizard that looked down his nose at me where I sat in the front row. He bit on me pretty good, I guess because I didn't look like nobody else in that class, with my short red hair and blue jeans that were blue. I flunked out that semester, but I got my money's worth learning about people that don't have hearts no bigger than bird shot.

Tammynette and Moonbean gave the engine a long shove and then got distracted by a yellow butterfly playing in a clump of pigweed, and that 900-pound V-8 kind of ironed them out on the back swing. So I picked up the squalling girls and got everybody inside, where I cleaned them good with Go-Jo.

"I want a Icee!" Tammynette yelled, while I was getting the motor oil from between her fingers. "I ain't had a Icee all day."

"You don't need one every day, little miss," I told her.

"Don't you got some money?" She pulled a hand away and flipped her hair with it like a model on TV.

"Those things cost most of a dollar. When I was a kid,

I used to get a nickel for candy, and that only twice a week."

"Icee!" she yelled in my face. Moonbean took up the cry and called out from the kitchen in her dull little voice. She wasn't dull in the head, she just talked low, like a bad cowboy actor. Nu-Nu sat up in the port-a-crib and gargled something, so I gathered everyone up, put them in the Caprice, and drove them down to the Gumwood Pak-a-Sak. The baby was in my lap when I pulled up, and Freddie was tuning in some rock music that sounded like hail on a tin roof. Two guys I know, older than me, watched us roll to the curb. When I turned the engine off, I heard one of them say, "Here comes Bruton and his bastardmobile." I grabbed the steering wheel hard and looked down on the top of Nu-Nu's head, feeling like someone just told me my house burned down. I'm always sunburned, so the



old men couldn't see the shame rising in my face. I got out, pretending I didn't hear anything, Nu-Nu in the crook of my arm like a loaf of bread. I wanted to punch the guy who said it and break his upper plate, but I could imagine the article in the local paper. I could see the memories the kids would have of their grandfather whaling away at two snuff-dripping geezers. I looked them in the eye and smiled, surprising myself. Bastardmobile. Man.

"Hey, Bruton," said the younger one, a Mr. Fordlyson, maybe sixty-five. "All them kids yours? You start over?"

"Grandkids," I said, holding Nu-Nu over Fordlyson's shoes, so maybe he'd drool on them.

The older one wore a straw fedora and was nicked up in twenty places with skin-cancer operations. He snorted. "Maybe you can do better with this batch," he told me. He was also a Mr. Fordlyson, the other guy's uncle. He used to run the hardwood sawmill north of town, was a deacon in the Baptist Church, and owned about one percent of the pissant bank down next to the gin. He thought he was king of Gumwood, but then every old man in town who had five dollars in his pocket and an opinion on the tip of his tongue thought the same.

I pushed past him and went into the Pak-a-Sak. The kids saw the candy rack and cried out for Mars Bars and Zeros. Even Nu-Nu put out a slobbery hand, toward the Gummy Worms, but I ignored their whining and drew them each a small Coke Icee. Tammynette and Moonbean grabbed theirs and headed for the door. Freddie took his carefully when I offered it. Nu-Nu might be kind of wobble-headed and as plain as a melon, but he sure knew what an Icee was and how to go after a straw. And what a smile when that Coke syrup hit those bald gums of his.

Right then Freddie looked up at me with his green eyes in that speckled face and said, "What's a bastardmobile?"

I guess my mouth dropped open. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"I thought we was in a Chevrolet," he said.

"We are."

"Well, that man said we was in a—"

"Never mind what he said. You must have misheard him." I nudged him toward the door and we went out. The older Mr. Fordlyson was watching us like we were a parade. I tried to look straight ahead. In my mind the newspaper bore the headline "LOCAL MAN ARRESTED WITH GRANDCHILDREN FOR ASSAULT." I got into the car with the kids and looked back out at the Fordlysons where they sat on a bumper rail, sweating through their white shirts and staring at us. Their kids owned sawmills, ran fast-food franchises, were on the school board. They were all married. I guess the young Fordlysons were smart, though looking at that pair you'd never know where they got their brains. I backed out onto the highway, trying not to think, but to me the word was spelled out in chrome script on my fenders: *Bastardmobile*.

On the way home Tammynette stole a suck on Freddie's straw, and he jerked it away and called her a word I'd heard only from the younger workers at the plywood mill. The word hit me in the back of the head like a brick, and I pulled off the road onto the gravel shoulder. "What'd you say, boy?"

"Nothing." But he reddened. I saw he cared what I thought.

"Kids your age don't use language like that."

Tammynette flipped her hair and raised her chin. "How old you got to be?"

I gave her a look. "Don't you care what he said to you?"

"It's what they say on the comedy program," Freddie said. "Everybody says that."

"What comedy program?"

"It comes on after the nighttime news."

"What you doing up late at night?"

He just stared at me, and I saw that he had no idea of what late was. Glendine, his mamma, probably lets him fall asleep in front of the set every night. I pictured him crumpled up on that smelly shag rug she keeps in front of the TV to catch the spills and crumbs.

HEN I got home, I took them all onto our covered side porch. The girls began to struggle with jacks, their little ball bouncing crooked on the slanted floor. Freddie played tunes on his Icee straw, and Nu-Nu fell asleep in my lap. I stared at my car and wondered if its name had spread throughout the community, if everywhere I drove people would call out, "Here comes the bastardmobile!" Gumwood is one of those towns where everybody looks at everything that moves. I do it myself. If my neighbor, Miss Hanchy, pulls out of her lane, I wonder, Now where is the old bat off to? It's two-thirty, so her soap opera must be over. I figure her route to the store, and then somebody different drives by and catches my attention, and I think after them. This is not all bad. It makes you watch how you behave, and besides, what's the alternative? Nobody giving a flip about whether you live or die? I've heard those stories from the big cities about how people will sit in an apartment window six stories up, watch somebody take ten minutes to kill you with a stick, and not even reach for the phone.

I started thinking about my four daughters. None of them has any religion to speak of. I thought they'd pick it up from their mamma, like I did from mine, but LaNelle always worked so much that she just had time to cook, clean, transport, and fuss. The girls grew up watching cable and videos every night, and that's where they got their view of the world, and that's why four dirty blondes with weak chins from St. Helena Parish thought they lived in a Hollywood soap opera. They also thought the married pulpwood-truck drivers and garage mechanics they dated were movie stars. I guess a lot of what's wrong with my girls is my fault, but I don't know what I could've done different.

Moonbean raked in a gaggle of jacks, and a splinter from the porch floor ran up under her nail. "Shit dog," she said, wagging her hand like it was on fire and coming to me on her knees.

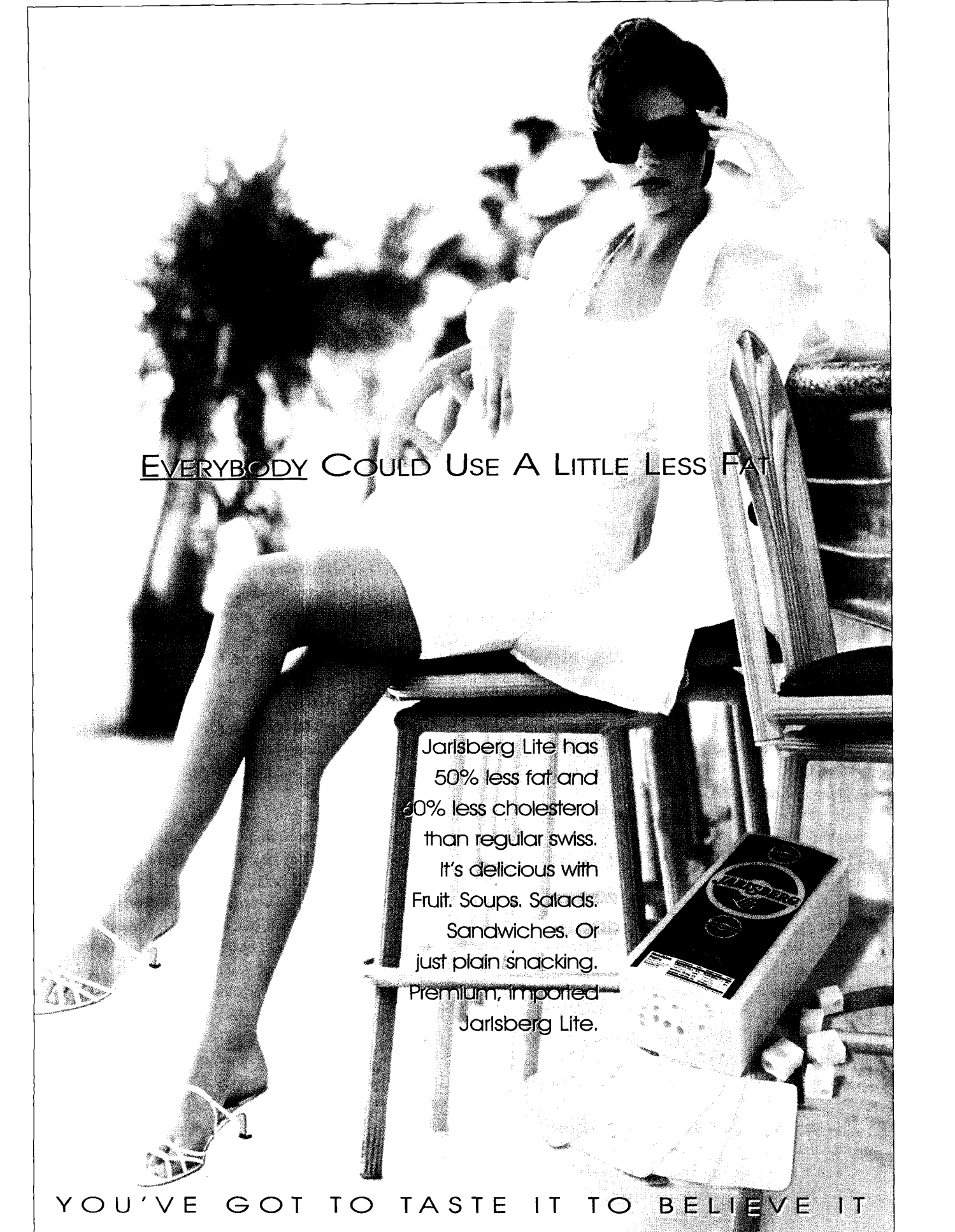
"Don't say that."

"My finger hurts. Fix it, Paw-Paw."

"I will if you stop talking like white trash."

Tammynette bounced her jacks ball and picked up on fivesies. "Melvin says 'shit dog.'"

"Would you do everything your mamma's boyfriend does?"



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"Melvin can drive," Tammynette said. "I'd like to drive."

I got out my penknife and worked the splinter from under Moonbean's nail while she jabbered to Tammynette about how her mamma's Toyota cost more than Melvin's teeny Dodge truck. I swear I don't know how these kids got so complicated. When I was their age, all I wanted to do was make mud pies or play in the creek. I didn't want anything but a twice-a-week nickel to bring to the store. These kids ain't eight years old and already know enough to run a casino. When I finished, I looked down at Moonbean's brown eyes, at Nu-Nu's pulsing head. "Does your mammas ever talk to y'all about, you know, God?"

"My mamma says 'God' when she's cussing Melvin," Tammynette said.

"That's not what I mean. Do they read Bible stories to y'all at bedtime?"

Freddie's face brightened. "She rented *Conan the Barbarian* for us once. That movie kicked ass."

"That's not a Bible movie," I told him.

"It ain't? It's got swords and snakes in it."

"What's that got to do with anything?"

Tammynette came close and grabbed Nu-Nu's hand and played the fingers like they were piano keys. "Ain't the Bible full of swords and snakes?"

Nu-Nu woke up and peed on himself, so I had to go for a plastic diaper. On the way back from the bathroom I saw our little bookrack out the corner of my eye. I found my old Bible-stories hardback and brought it out on the porch. It was time somebody taught them something about something.

They gathered round, sitting on the floor, and I got down amongst them. I started into Genesis and how God made the earth, and how he made us and gave us a soul that would live forever. Moonbean reached into the book and put her hand on God's beard. "If he shaved, he'd look just like that old man down at the Pak-a-Sak," she said.

My mouth dropped a bit. "You mean Mr. Fordlyson? That man don't look like God."

Tammynette yawned. "You just said God made us to look like him."

"Never mind," I told them, going on into Adam and Eve and the garden. Soon as I turned the page, they saw the snake and began to squeal.

"Look at the size of that sucker," Freddie said.

Tammynette wiggled closer. "I knew they was a snake in this book."

"He's a bad one," I told them. "He lied to Adam and Eve and said to not do what God told them to do."

Moonbean looked up at me slow. "This snake can talk?"

"Yes."

"How about that. Just like in cartoons. I thought they was making that up."

"Well, a real snake can't talk nowadays," I explained.

"Ain't this garden snake a real snake?" Freddie asked.

"It's the devil in disguise," I told them.

Tammynette flipped her hair. "Aw, that's just a old song. I heard it on the reddieo."

"That Elvis Presley tune's got nothing to do with the devil making himself into a snake in the Garden of Eden."

"Who's Elvis Presley?" Moonbean sat back in the dust by the weatherboard wall and stared out at my overgrown lawn.

"He's some old singer died a million years ago," Tammynette told her.

"Was he in the Bible too?"

I beat the book on the floor. "No, he ain't. Now pay attention. This is important." I read the section about Adam and Eve disobeying God, turned the page, and all hell broke loose. An angel was holding a long sword over Adam and Eve's downturned heads as he ran them out of the garden. Even Nu-Nu got excited and pointed a finger at the angel.

"What's that guy doing?" Tammynette asked.

"Chasing them out of Paradise. Adam and Eve did a bad thing, and when you do bad, you get punished for it." I looked down at their faces, and it seemed that they were all thinking about something at the same time. It was scary, the little sparks I saw flying in their eyes. Whatever you tell them at this age stays forever. You got to be careful. Freddie looked up at me and asked, "Did they ever get to go back?"

"Nope. Eve started worrying about everything, and Adam had to work every day like a beaver just to get by."

"Was that angel really gonna stick Adam with that sword?" Moonbean asked.

"Forget about that darned sword, will you?"

"Well, that's just mean" is what she said.

"No, it ain't," I said. "They got what was coming to them." Then I went into Noah and the flood, and in the middle of things Freddie piped up.

"You mean all the bad people got drowned at once? All right."

I looked down at him hard and saw that the Bible was turning into one big adventure film for him. Freddie had already watched so many movies that any religion he heard about would nest in his brain on top of *Tanga the Cave Woman* and *Bikini Death Squad*. I got everybody a cold drink and a jelly sandwich, and after that I turned on a window unit and handed out Popsicles. We sat inside, on the couch, because the heat had waked up the yellow flies outside. I tore into how Abraham almost stabbed Isaac, and the kids' eyes got big when they saw the knife. I hoped that they got a sense of obedience to God out of it, but when I asked Freddie what the point of the story was, he just shrugged and looked glum. Tammynette, however, had an opinion. "He's just like O. J. Simpson!"

Freddie shook his head. "Naw. God told Abraham to do it just as a test."

"Maybe God told O. J. to do what he did," Tammynette sang.

"Naw. O. J. did it on his own," Freddie told her. "He didn't like his wife no more."

"Well, maybe Abraham didn't like his son no more neither, so he was gonna kill him dead, and God stopped him." Tammynette's voice was starting to rise the way her mother's did when she'd been drinking.

"Daddies don't kill their sons when they don't like them," Freddie told her. "They just pack up and leave." He broke apart the two halves of his Popsicle and bit one and then the other.

Real quick I started in on Sodom and Gomorrah and the burning of the towns full of wicked people. Moonbean was struck by Lot's wife. "I saw this movie once where Martians shot a gun at you and turned you into a statue. You reckon it was Martians burnt down those towns?"

"The Bible is not a movie," I told her.

"I think I seen it down at Blockbuster," Tammy-nette said.

I didn't stop to argue, but pushed on through Moses and the Ten Commandments, spending a lot of time on No. 6, since that one give their mammas so much trouble. Then Nu-Nu began to rub his nose with the backs of his hands and started to tune up, so I knew it was time to put the book down and wash faces and get snacks and play crawl-

around. I was determined not to turn on the TV again, but Freddie hit the button when I was in the kitchen. When Nu-Nu and I came into the living room, they were in a half circle around a talk show. On the set were several overweight, tattooed, frowning, slouching individuals who, the announcer told us, had tricked their parents into signing over ownership of their houses and then evicted them. The kids watched like they were looking at cartoons—which is to say, they gobbled it all up. At a commercial I asked Moonbean, who has the softest heart, what she thought of kids that threw their parents

into the street. She put a finger in one ear and said through a long yawn that if the parents did mean things, then the kids could do what they wanted to them. I shook my head, went in the kitchen, found the Christmas vodka, and poured myself a long drink over some ice cubes. I stared out in the yard to where my last pickup truck lay dead and rusting in a pile of wisteria at the edge of the lot. I formed a little fantasy about

gathering all these kids into my Caprice and heading out northwest to start over, away from their mammas, TVs, mildew, their casino-mad grandmother, and Louisiana in general. I could get a job, raise them right, send them to college so that they could own sawmills and run car dealerships.

A drop of sweat rolled off the glass and hit my right shoe, and I looked down at it. The leather lace-ups I was wearing were paint-spattered and twenty years old. They told me I hadn't held a steady job in a long time, that whatever bad was gonna happen was partly my fault. I wondered then if my wife had had the same fantasy: leaving her scruffy, sunburned, failed-welder husband home and moving away with these kids, maybe taking a course in clerical skills and getting a job in Utah, raising them right, sending them off to college. Maybe even each of

their mammas had the same fantasy, pulling their kids out of their parents' gassy-smelling old house and heading away from the heat and humidity. I took another long swallow and wondered why one of us didn't do it. I looked out to my Caprice, sitting in the shade of a pecan tree, shadows of leaves moving on it, making it quiver like a dark-green flame, and I realized we couldn't drive away from ourselves. We couldn't escape in the bastardmobile.

In the pantry I opened the house's circuit panel and rotated out a fuse until I heard a cry from the living room. I went



in and pulled down a storybook, something about a dog saving a train. My wife bought it twenty years ago for one of our daughters, but never read it to her. I sat in front of the dark television.

"What's wrong with the TV, Paw-Paw?" Moonbean rasped.

"It died," I said, opening the book. They squirmed and complained, but after a few pages they were hooked. It was a good book, one I'd read myself one afternoon during a thunderstorm. But while I was reading, this blue feeling got me. I began to think, What's the use? I'm just one old man with a little brown book of Bible stories and a doggie-hero tale. How can that compete with daily MTV, kids' programs that make big people look like fools, the Playboy Channel, the shiny magazines their mammas and their boyfriends leave around the house, magazines like *Me*, and *Self*, and *Love Guides*, and rental movies where people kill each other with no more thought than it would take to swat a fly—nothing at all like what Abraham suffered before he raised that knife? But I read on for a half hour, and when that dog stopped the locomotive before it pulled the passenger train over the collapsed bridge, even Tammynette clapped her sticky hands.

THE next day I didn't have much on the welding schedule, so after one or two little jobs, including the bed rail that my daughter began to rag me about, I went out to pick up a window grate the town marshal wanted me to fix. It was hot right after lunch, and Gumwood was quivering with heat. Across from the cypress railroad station was our little red-brick city hall with a green copper dome on it, and on the grass in front of that was a pecan tree and a wooden bench under it. Old men sometimes gathered there under the cool branches and told each other how to fix tractors that hadn't been made in fifty years, or how to make grits out of a strain of corn that didn't exist anymore. Locals called that pecan the Tree of Knowledge. When I walked by, going to the marshal's office, I saw the older Mr. Fordlyson seated in the middle of the long bench, blinking at the street like a chicken. He called out to me.

"Bruton," he said. "Too hot to weld?"

I didn't think it was a friendly comment, though he waved for me to come over. "Something like that." I was tempted to walk on, but he motioned for me to sit next to him, which I did. I looked across the street for a long time. "Yesterday at the store," I began, "you said my car was a bastardmobile."

Fordlyson blinked twice but didn't change his expression. Most local men would be embarrassed at being caught in rudeness, but he sat there with his face as hard as a ploughshare. "Isn't that what it is?" he said at last.

I should have been mad, and I was mad, but I kept on. "It was a mean thing to let me hear." I looked down and wagged my head. "I need help with those kids, not your meanness."

He looked at me with his little nickel-colored eyes glinting under that straw fedora with the black-silk hatband. "What kind of help you need?"

I picked up a pecan that was still in its green pod. "I'd like to fix it so those grandkids do right. I'm thinking of talking to their mammas and—"

"Too late for their mammas." He put up a hand and let it fall like an ax. "They'll have to decide to straighten out on their own. Nothing you can tell those girls now will change them a whit." He said this in a tone that hinted I was stupid for not seeing this. Dumb as a post. He looked off to the left for half a second and then back. "You got to deal directly with those kids."

"I'm trying." I cracked the nut open on the edge of the bench.

"Tryin' won't do shit. You got to bring them to Sunday school every week. You go to church?"

"Yeah."

"Don't eat that green pecan—it'll make you sick. Which church you go to?"

"Bonner Straight Gospel."

He flew back as though he'd just fired a twelve-gauge at the dog sleeping under the station platform across the street. "Bruton, your wild-man preacher is one step away from taking up serpents. I've heard he lets the kids come to the main service and yells at them about frying in hell like chicken parts. You got to keep them away from that man. Why don't you come to First Baptist?"

I looked at the ground. "I don't know."

The old man bobbed his head once. "I know damned well why not. You won't tithe."

That hurt deep. "Hey, I don't have a lot of extra money. I know the Baptists got good Sunday-school programs, but . . ."

Fordlyson waved a finger in the air like a little sword. "Well, join the Methodists. The Presbyterians." He pointed up the street. "Join those Catholics. Some of them don't put more than a dollar a week in the plate, but there are so many of them, and the church has so many services a weekend, that the priests can run the place on volume, like Wal-Mart."

I knew several good mechanics who were Methodists. "How's their children's programs?"

The old man spoke out of the side of his mouth. "Better'n you got now."

"I'll think about it," I told him.

"Yeah, bullshit. You'll go home and weld together a log truck, and tomorrow you'll go fishing, and you'll never do nothing for them kids, and they'll all wind up serving time in Angola or on their backs in New Orleans."

It got me hot the way he thought he had all the answers, and I turned on him quick. "Okay, wise man. I came to the Tree of Knowledge. Tell me what to do."

He pulled down one finger on his right hand with the fore-

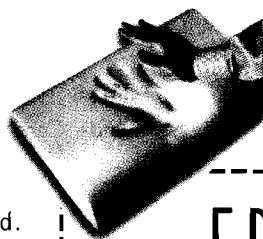


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finger of the left. "Go join the Methodists." Another finger went down, and he told me, "Every Sunday bring them children to church." A third finger, and he said, "And keep 'em with you as much as you can."

I shook my head. "I already raised my kids."

Fordlyson looked at me hard and didn't have to say what he was thinking. He glanced down at the ground between his smooth-toe lace-ups. "And clean up your yard."

"What's that got to do with anything?"

"It's got everything to do with everything."

"Why?"

"If you don't know, I can't tell you." Here he stood up, and I saw his daughter at the curb in her Lincoln. One leg wouldn't straighten all the way out, and I could see the pain in his face. I grabbed his arm, and he smiled a mean little smile and leaned in to me for a second and said, "Bruton, everything worth doing hurts like hell." He toddled off and left me with his sour breath on my face and a thought forming in my head like a rain cloud.

FTER a session with the Methodist preacher I went home and stared at the yard and then stared at the telephone until I got up the strength to call Famous Amos Salvage. The next morning a wrecker and a gondola came down my road, and before noon Amos loaded up four derelict cars, six engines, four washing machines, ten broken lawn mowers, and two and a quarter tons of scrap iron. I begged and borrowed Miss Hanchy's Super-A and bush-hogged the three acres I own and then some. I cut the grass and picked up around the workshop. With the money I got from the scrap, I bought some aluminum paint for the shop and some first-class stuff for the outside of the house. The next morning I was up at seven replacing screen on the little porch. On the big porch on the side I put down a heavy coat of glossy green deck enamel. At lunch my wife stuck her head through the porch door. "The kids are coming over again. How you gonna keep 'em off of all that wet paint?"

My knees were killing me, and I couldn't figure how to keep Nu-Nu from crawling out here. "I don't know."

She looked around at the wet glare. "What's got into you, changing our religion and all?"

"Time for a change, I guess." I loaded up my brush.

She thought about this a moment and then pointed. "Careful you don't paint yourself in a corner."

"I'm doing the best I can."

"It's about time," she said under her breath, walking away.

I backed off the porch and down the steps and then stood in the pine straw next to the house, painting the ends of the porch boards. I heard a car come down the road and watched my oldest daughter drive up and get out with Nu-Nu over her shoulder. When she came close, I looked at her dyed hair, which was the color and texture of fiberglass insulation, the dark mascara, and the olive skin under her eyes. She

smelled of cigarette smoke, stale smoke, like she hadn't had a bath in three days. Her tan blouse was tight and tied in a knot above her navel, which was a lardy hole. She passed Nu-Nu to me like he was a ham. "Can he stay the night?" she asked. "I want to go hear some music."

"Why not?"

She looked around slowly. "Looks like a bomb hit this place and blew everything away." The door to her dusty compact creaked open, and a freckled hand came out. "I forgot to mention that I picked up Freddie on the way in. Hope you don't mind." She didn't look at me as she mumbled this, hands on her hips. Freddie, who had been sleeping, I guess, sat on the edge of the car seat and rubbed his eyes like a drunk.

"He'll be all right here," I said.

She took in a deep, slow breath, so deathly bored that I felt sorry for her. "Well, guess I better be heading on down the road." She turned and then whipped around on me. "Hey, guess what."

"What?"

"Nu-Nu finally said his first word yesterday." She was biting the inside of her cheek, I could tell.

I looked at the baby, who was going after my shirt buttons. "What'd he say?"

"Da-da." And her eyes started to get red, so she broke and ran for her car.

"Wait," I called, but it was too late. In a flash she was gone in a cloud of gravel dust, racing toward the most cigarette smoke, music, and beer she could find in one place.

I took Freddie and the baby around to the back steps by the little screen porch and sat down. We tickled and goo-gooed at Nu-Nu until finally he let out a "Da-da"—real loud, like a call.

Freddie looked back toward the woods, at the nice trees in the yard, which looked like what they were now that the trash had been carried off. "What happened to all the stuff?"

"Gone," I said. "We gonna put a tire swing on that tall willow oak there, first off."

"All right. Can you cut a drain hole in the bottom so the rainwater won't stay in it?" He came close and put a hand on top of the baby's head.

"Yep."

"A big steel-belt tire?"

"Sounds like a plan." Nu-Nu looked at me and yelled, "Da-da," and I thought how he'd be saying that in one way or another for the rest of his life and never be able to face the fact that Da-da had skipped town, whoever Da-da was. The baby brought me into focus, somebody's blue eyes looking at me hard. He blew spit over his tongue and cried out, "Da-da," and I put him on my knee, facing away toward the cool green branches of my biggest willow oak.

"Even Nu-Nu can ride the tire," Freddie said.

"He can fit the circle in the middle," I told him. ☼





An Audubon in Sound

*Messiaen's radiant birdsongs,
the crown of his creation, belong as much to
the artist as to nature*

IN 1945 Virgil Thomson was spreading the word to America of a "thirty-seven-year-old boy wonder" whom Parisians were calling the "atomic bomb of contemporary music." Olivier Messiaen was his name, and he had published a two-volume treatise, *Technique de mon langage musical*, the year before. Such self-analysis was not as megalomaniacal as its eyebrow-raising title might suggest; almost nothing Messiaen wrote followed traditional forms, and musical progressives wanted to know what he was up to.

Already his output featured large-

scale, ingeniously crafted works for orchestra, piano (solo and duo), and organ, the lush song cycle *Poèmes pour Mi* (Mi being the nickname of Messiaen's first wife), and the masterpiece *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (*Quartet for the End of Time*), scored for the unusual combination of violin, clarinet, cello, and piano. These happened to be the instruments, broken-down though they were, available when Messiaen, a famished and frozen prisoner of war, wrote the piece in a Silesian internment camp. There the quartet received its first performance, before an

audience of 5,000. "Never," the composer later wrote, "had I been listened to with such attention and understanding."

In the future lay the *Turangalila-symphonie* (the title, taken from Sanskrit, implies a cosmic love song, a hymn to joy, time, movement, rhythm, life, and death). An eighty-minute pageant of volcanic energy alternating with voluptuous serenity, the symphony displays throughout a knowledge second to none of what musical instruments can do. Also still to come were a sequence of phenomenal piano and orchestra pieces dazzlingly wrought from the real songs of birds; the monumental *La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ*, which runs an hour and forty minutes and calls for seven instrumental soloists, a chorus of one hundred, and an immense orchestra heavily reinforced with percussion; the opera *Saint François d'Assise*, of Wagnerian duration (four solid hours of music), depicting moments in the spiritual history of Saint Francis, in deliberately action-free fashion; and much, much more.

Acceptance of Messiaen's scores was by no means instantaneous or general. In 1960, outside the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées after the world premiere of the

by **Matthew Gurewitsch**

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Who should not use CAVERJECT? CAVERJECT should not be used by men with any of the following conditions: Conditions that might result in long-lasting erections, such as sickle cell anemia or trait, leukemia, and tumor of the bone marrow (multiple myeloma); Penile implants; Abnormally formed penis or Peyronie's disease; Men who have been advised by their doctor not to engage in sexual activity; Allergy to CAVERJECT (alprostadil) or any of its ingredients. In addition, CAVERJECT should not be used by women or children.

What are the precautions associated with use of CAVERJECT?

1. **Priapism (erection lasting over 6 hours):** Erections lasting more than 6 hours (priapism) were reported in fewer than 1 of every 200 patients in clinical studies. This condition, although rare, requires immediate medical attention from your doctor or the closest emergency room because it can result in permanent damage to the tissue of the penis. To minimize the risk of priapism, CAVERJECT should be used at the lowest effective dose.

2. **Penile fibrosis:** In clinical studies, the overall incidence of penile fibrosis (lumps or curving of the erect penis), including a condition called Peyronie's disease, was 3 of every 100 men who used CAVERJECT. In one self-injection study where CAVERJECT was used for up to 18 months, penile fibrosis was reported in 7.8% of men.

3. **Patients on anticoagulants (blood thinners):** Anticoagulants such as warfarin or heparin can contribute to an increased risk of bleeding after injection. Thereafter, tell your health care provider if you are taking this type of medicine.

4. **Determination of the cause of impotence:** Underlying treatable causes of impotence should be diagnosed and treated before starting treatment with CAVERJECT.

5. **Sexually transmitted or blood-borne diseases and injection-site bleeding:** Use of CAVERJECT offers no protection from the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV infection. You should understand the protective measures necessary to guard against the spread of STDs. The injection of CAVERJECT can result in a small amount of bleeding at the site of injection, which could increase the risk of transmission of blood-borne diseases between patients infected with blood-borne diseases and their partners.

Do not share or reuse needles or syringes.

6. **Patient information:** Patient instructions for administration are included in each package of CAVERJECT. You should read and understand these instructions completely. Properly discard needles after use. Do not allow anyone else to use your medicine.

7. **Dose titration:** To ensure safe and effective use of CAVERJECT, you should be thoroughly instructed and trained in the self-injection technique by your health care provider before beginning treatment at home. The desirable dose should be established during an office visit, and should not be changed without first consulting your health care provider. The instructions for preparation and self-injection of the CAVERJECT solution should be carefully followed.

8. **Regular checkups:** You should visit your health care provider regularly while on self-injection treatment with CAVERJECT. It is recommended that you visit the prescribing professional's office every 3 months. At that time, the safety and efficacy of therapy with CAVERJECT should be evaluated, and the dose adjusted, if needed.

Can I use CAVERJECT while taking other medications? In clinical trials, use of medicines to treat high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, and fluid retention had no effect on the efficacy or safety of CAVERJECT. However, the health care provider who prescribes CAVERJECT for you should be aware of all medicines you are taking.

What side effects might occur during use of CAVERJECT? Before using CAVERJECT, talk with your doctor about possible side effects and what to do if side effects occur. The most common side effect reported in clinical studies was mild to moderate penile pain after injection. About one third of men reported this effect. Three percent of men discontinued treatment because of penile pain. Other side effects involving the penis and reported by 1% to 4% of patients included prolonged erection, penile fibrosis, injection site bruising, penis disorder (including numbness, infection, irritation, sensitivity, itching, and discoloration), penile rash, and penile swelling. Priapism (erection lasting over 6 hours) was rarely reported. Seek immediate medical attention if this occurs. Other side effects have also been reported with the use of CAVERJECT. Call your doctor if you notice any redness, lumps, swelling, tenderness, or curving of the erect penis.

What is a typical dose of CAVERJECT? The correct dose of CAVERJECT for you must be determined by your health care provider during an office or clinic visit. Most men will use between 5 and 20 micrograms per dose; doses greater than 60 micrograms are not recommended. The dose of CAVERJECT that is selected for you during your office visit should not be changed without consulting your health care provider. If you accidentally inject an overdose of CAVERJECT, you should call your health care provider immediately.

How fast will CAVERJECT work? The correct dose properly injected should produce an erection in 5 to 20 minutes. The erection should last for about 1 hour.

How often can I use CAVERJECT? Generally, CAVERJECT should be used no more than three times per week, with at least 24 hours between each use.

How should CAVERJECT be stored? Unused packs of CAVERJECT may be stored at or below 77°F (25°C). Do not freeze. After mixing the solution for injection, CAVERJECT should be used immediately.

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challenging *Chronochromie* (which in one now-famous passage requires the eighteen string players to play eighteen different birdsongs simultaneously), an exasperated member of the orchestra hit the composer with a shoe. Through the very end of the sixties Messiaen's music continued to encounter insult and abuse. These still smarted in the last years of his life, although by then the tide was turning. Detractors notwithstanding, prestigious commissions had long been coming and continued to come Messiaen's way. In 1992, at the age of eighty-three, he died showered with honors, a cult idol in his native France and throughout the world, notably in the United States and Japan. Before long he may be joining the universal pantheon as a new colossus—the next Mahler, as it were, though as unlike Mahler as Mahler is unlike Mozart.

To outward appearances Messiaen was a gentle soul, quietly earning his bread as a teacher, first at the École Normale de Musique and later at the Paris Conservatoire, and as the organist at the church of La Trinité for fifty years. But in his art he was intrepid. His classes in harmony and analysis attracted the most daring talents of the postwar generation: Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Iannis Xenakis, and, toward the end, George Benjamin, whose compositional abilities Messiaen likened to the young Mozart's. With his students Messiaen explored Western music from Gregorian chant and Monteverdi through compositions still wet on the page, not to mention exotica like rhythmic systems from India (the intricate *deci-tâlas* that figure so prominently in Messiaen's own writing) and metrics from ancient Greece. His knowledge of the musical heritage was encyclopedic; constant interaction with the brightest of his juniors kept him young.

Receptive as Messiaen was to impulses from far-flung sources, his sympathies were by no means all-embracing. No postmodernist, he recognized that aesthetics has a history; he saw no point in trying to replay the gambits of the past. Unlike the eclectic Stravinsky, who plunged into ism after ism, Messiaen dabbled in new developments (electronic music, total serialism) only in a very controlled and time-limited way. The

son of a father who translated Shakespeare and a mother who wrote mystical, rather purple verse, Messiaen found his voice early—a voice like no other. To judge from his earliest publications, his musical godfathers were César Franck and Claude Debussy; his precocious love of Wagner echoes in musical reminiscences of the lonely English-horn solo of *Tristan und Isolde*. But what is original in Messiaen infinitely outweighs any influence. The atomic-bomb metaphor is grotesquely inappropriate. To discover Messiaen is to make landfall on a virgin continent teeming with life, rejoicing in that natural condition perhaps best called a state of grace, unravaged by civilization—if an abode for humankind at all.

At first the explorer may be as much bewildered as bewitched. Messiaen discloses many-splendored landscapes mystical and sumptuous, ajangle with birdsong, awash in rainbows. One will not go away from a concert humming the tunes; melody, in the linear sense, is seldom prominent. Messiaen's is supremely a music of simultaneities, of layers and textures.

Typically, it comes complete with a map: Messiaen's own painstaking record of his intentions, materials, and techniques. How much practical guidance the map offers is another question. The symphonic *Réveil des oiseaux* lists, in order of appearance, more than three dozen birds. Good luck picking them out—and what exactly is gained if one does? And what on earth is one to make of the knowledge that a certain Messiaen "mode," or sequence of notes, consists of "horizontally layered stripes: from bottom to top, dark gray, mauve, light gray, and white with mauve and pale yellow highlights—with flaming gold letters, of an unknown script, and a quantity of little red or blue arcs that are very thin, very fine, hardly visible"?

FOUR key factors set Messiaen's music apart. First is his Catholicism, a faith he claimed to have been simply born with (though his parents were non-believers), which to him was an inexhaustible font of metaphysical ideas. Second, his idiosyncratic notion of color. Third, his iconoclastic approach to rhythm. Fourth, his use of meticulously transcribed birdsong, from which he

spun fantasias of bizarre brilliance. In various ways each of these wellsprings of inspiration put Messiaen in what he termed “eternal conflict” with the public at large.

Messiaen wove divinity into his music by every musical and extramusical means he could devise: individual sections of his works appear under theological headings or quotations from Scripture; musical motifs are explicitly associated with such entities as God and the cross; he even went so far as to invent a musical alphabet of tones and durations for spelling out texts from the *Summa Theologica* of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

In conversation Messiaen spoke with quiet conviction of the Resurrection and the joy to come. Judging by the evidence of the music, I would say that he heard the voice of God the Father in bleak, granitic tones of the abyss (shades of Wagner’s dragon, Fafner); even agnostics may sense with awe the cliff against which all creation is bound for shipwreck. Elsewhere Messiaen’s music offers existential consolation, in strains inspired by the mystery of the Trinity. Whatever the message, Messiaen was preaching mostly to the unconverted. “I speak of faith to atheists,” he said. And this, he could see, was a problem.

Perhaps it no longer is. True, our cynical century has in the main tolerated sacred subject matter only from artists long dead. But on the cusp of the millennium ears, and possibly hearts, have opened to the messages of Pärt, Górecki, and Kancheli—not to mention Gregorian chant, which is racking up recording sales in the millions. These days Messiaen’s showy, formerly unfashionable spirituality may well attract new listeners rather than turn people off.

THE first of Messiaen’s four “eternal conflicts,” in other words, turns out to have been political and hence negotiable. The other three probably really are eternal, to the extent that they concern not his message but his material.

Start with color, the most perplexing issue of all. As Messiaen explains it, color seems to be a function equally of in-

strumental timbre, melodic shape, and harmonic underpinning. In his view it is no less fundamental a musical property than resonance—even superseding that traditional cornerstone tonality (which Messiaen summarily dismissed).

It always confuses layfolk when musicians speak of color, but the tradition for doing so goes way back, as technical terms such as “chromatic” and “coloratura” show. When “palette” or “shade” or “hue” or “dark” or “light” appears in musical discourse, what is usually meant has to do with expressive nuance—not with visual impressions at all. On the rare occasions when musicians get more specific, their paintbox proves pretty crude; they may aver, for instance, that the key of A major is an “intense sky blue.” Messiaen’s boundless aural vision took in the full spectrum of the psychedelic.

A clearer understanding of exactly what Messiaen meant by his descriptions of color in music has eluded just about everyone who has tried to find out. Pierre Boulez, who remained close to Messiaen throughout his life and has conducted transcendent performances of his scores, once asked him if he actually, physically, *saw* colors. “No!” Messiaen replied. “They’re only for me. I *imagine* color. It has no reality.”

Regarding rhythm, which is measurable and objective, one would expect to be on firmer footing, but here, too, Messiaen confounds expectation. Whereas in common usage “rhythm” implies movement either with or against a more or less steady beat, Messiaen insisted that a repetitive pulse intrinsically *precludes* rhythm. Virtually the only classical composer he was prepared to acknowledge as a “rhythmician” was Mozart—without peer in this respect as in others.

So what is rhythm? In Messiaen’s view, it arises from elaborate subdivisions of time, hypnotic in themselves but also implicated in cabalistic correspondences to the nature of eternity itself. Like many

mathematicians, Messiaen felt the strange spell of prime numbers. He liked to manipulate his basic musical material according to all manner of arithmetical formulas. He particularly delighted in constructing rhythmic palindromes—phrase units that play out (rhythmically, though not necessarily melodically) the same way forward and backward; they form, as it were, immobile arches within the cathedrals of his pieces. Messiaen accounted himself a “static” composer, and part of what he thought made him one was his symmetrical rhythms, which he called “nonretrogradable.”

I, too, often find Messiaen’s music static, perhaps for a different reason. Even when it is charging at a gallop, it scorns what in the vocabulary of classical masters from Haydn to Beethoven and beyond is called “development”: the countless strategies of anticipation, amplification, antithesis, and recapitulation that give a piece of music its sense of direction, its quality of being a journey from a point of origin to a point of arrival and fulfillment. Messiaen abjured such potent means of closure as clean triads; his pieces end in dissonance, trail off in mid-phrase . . .

Indeed, a better word than “static” might be “spatial.” The internal structures of his music feel less organic than geological: unrelated elements jostle and abut like boulders in a geological basin. In general Messiaen’s music makes no pretense of carrying us forward; we must traverse it by our own effort, step by step. Rather than unfolding, it gyrates on some unseen axis, no structural logic dictat-

ing how long it goes on doing so. Whether one judges a movement of a Messiaen work short or long depends strictly on one’s mood. At performances of the *Turangalila-symphonie* and *Éclairs sur l’Au-Delà*, I have felt like a tourist in a place of

marvels beyond number, rapt but frustrated: now rushed, now bored and forced to linger by a guide whose sense of the proper pace is not mine. If only one could wander through the music as one wanders through rooms! Messiaen disciples to whom I have floated this idea have not dismissed it out of hand.



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WHICH leaves us the great dazzle-ment of Messiaen's birdsong. Birds, as Messiaen never tired of saying, were earth's first musicians, and to his ears the best. People have been mimicking birds in music since the dawn of time. Certainly the Western canon, from Rameau, Vivaldi, and Bach on to Wagner, Strauss, and Stravinsky, abounds with owls, nightingales, cuckoos, and larks, evoked in picturesque but simplistic approximations. Until Messiaen the challenge of catching the complexities of contour and timbre of any but the plainest birdsongs went unattempted.

For Messiaen the desire was there long before he had worked out the requisite technique. In his early prelude *La Colombe* (1929) he was already making the piano coo and gurgle, but still operating well within the sphere of impressionist precedent. In the years following, Messiaen—music's Audubon—devoted a scholar's zeal to transcribing whole choirs of birds, always in traditional notation, always in the field. Often his second wife, the pianist Yvonne Loriod (whose performances of Messiaen's piano works, dedicated to her, remain unsurpassed), would tag along with a tape recorder, capturing backup material that proved invaluable later on. Messiaen's *Catalogue d'oiseaux* (for piano), depicting birds of France, eventually grew to seven books plus the half-hour coda and summation *La Fauvette des jardins* (*The Garden Warbler*).

Sometimes Messiaen would present birds individually; sometimes he would place them among the fauna of their habitat, amid detailed sonic "scenery." Sometimes he went so far as to reflect biorhythms, stage-directing air traffic; sometimes he would juxtapose the songs of various birds without regard for where they came from, seduced by their vocalizations and perhaps also by the romance of their names (Australia's superb lyrebird or an elusive specimen, heard but unseen, whose mystique he preserved in the makeshift phrase "the bird of Persepolis").

Birds do not sing the way people write music, and transcribing them was like concocting algebra to reproduce calligraphy: it took creativity of no small order. Some two dozen relevant birdsongs taped in Europe and Israel, appended to Hans-Ola Ericsson's recording (on the

BIS label) of Messiaen's last major organ cycle, *Livre du Saint Sacrement*, bring home the difficulty of the problem.

Birdsong moves faster than human fingers; the first thing to go when an instrumentalist mimics a bird is tempo. Also, Western melodies are strung together from notes, well-defined pitches neatly arrayed on scales. Birds sing microtones. They phrase in arabesques that swoop and glide. Their staccato "notes" are more like jagged shards than human musicians' points and beads of sound. The timbres and attacks are often energetic to the point of harshness, yet to our ears in the wild they may sound ineffably sweet. For the piano and for instruments of the orchestra Messiaen invented ways of clustering and combining notes to produce, often with uncanny verisimilitude, an impression of the real thing. Call it *trompe-l'oreille*.

At the same time, Messiaen took amazing liberties. He transposed certain songs deep into the registers of bassoon and bass clarinet, for instance. Real birds cannot make sounds that low. Boulez remembers joshing Messiaen about the incongruity: "No bird," he pointed out with Cartesian wit, "is gigantic enough." In the end Messiaen's birdsongs resemble his colors. "What he wrote," Boulez says, "was his *imagination* of birdsongs. If you analyze birdsong scientifically, you find none of the intervals Messiaen wrote. The starting point is in reality. The elaboration is very *irreal*."

Stained glass, Messiaen said, is light captured by man. By the same token, art is life captured by man. Like Monet's water lilies, Messiaen's birdsongs belong no more to nature than to the artist. Gathering the materials in the first place and then weaving them into his own warp and woof, as Messiaen did, would have been impossible without *his* ears, *his* mind. Unlike Bach's fugues, which have served as procedural examples for generations of composers and can still serve that function, Messiaen's accomplishments in *Chronochromie* and *Réveil des oiseaux* and the great sermon to the birds in the opera *Saint François*—blazing walls of bejeweled sound—transcend emulation. The next composer who wants to sing the music of the birds will have to start from scratch. Birdsong is the crown of Messiaen's creation; there's none left where his came from.

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Global Problem

Question: What do famine in the African Sahel, typhoons devastating Bangladesh, and China's dominance of the athletic shoe market in the U.S. all have in common?

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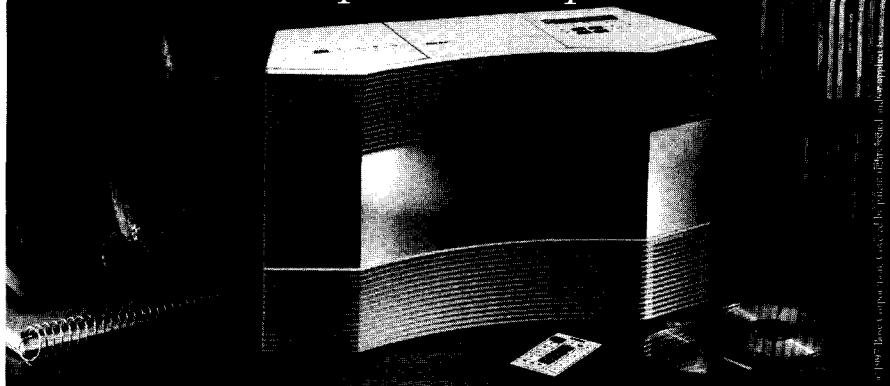
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Left, Right, & Center

The song is "Both Sides Now." Across. 1. BA(THE)RS; T(ACT)IC 5. NUG + GET (gun rev.); OT + HELL + O 6. SH(ALL)OT; GRO(O)VE 7. HEROINE (homophone); CEY(L)ON (Coney anag.) 8. LESSER (homophone); ANNEXES (an + ex's homophone) 9. S(ACRE)D; IS + TH(e) + MU'S 12. DE(S)IGNS; A(WARD)S (rev.) 14. MA(G)NET; TERM + IT + E 15. IG + NI + TES (rev.); INGE + A + R 16. PAIUTE (anag.); A + CA(DI + A)N 17. O + RANGES; TAG END (hidden) 18. ENERG + Y (green anag.); W + O + R + SEN + S Down. 1. AN + GEL; TOSCA (anag.) 2. A(THE)NA; TU(RRE)T (err rev.) 3. TELLER (double def.); E(GO + IS)M 4. STEERS (double def.); C(LONE)D (DC rev.) 9. SEMIPRO (anag.); SATIATE (say she ate homophone) 10. HIG(h) + GINS; CAR(NAG)E 11. EDITING (anag.); U + NEATEN 13. S + TRESS; STEADY (anag.)

FIVE years after falling silent Messiaen continues to speak through his music, though live performances are hardly commonplace. Still, he is well represented on CD. The authorized version, as it were, of most of the principal works is a twelve-volume box on the Erato label. These albums (many are also available separately) feature Messiaen himself on the organ; Yvonne Loriod, who is as imaginative as she is magisterial on the piano; and a host of other musicians close to the master's circle—among them the golden-hued soprano Maria Orán, making an eloquent case (no easy task) for Messiaen as a composer for the human voice.

Many individual performances recommend themselves as introductions to Messiaen's sound world. The pinpoint brilliance of combined timbres in Kent Nagano's startling new *Réveil des oiseaux*, also on Erato, brings to mind the pointillism of Georges Seurat. The Deutsche Grammophon label's Messiaen discography is short but choice, with Boulez in charge of a transparent yet intoxicating *Chronochromie* and Myung-Whun Chung leading a radiant *Éclairs* and a *Turangalila* imbued with the spirit of dance.

Deutsche Grammophon has also issued an inviting seventy-five-minute sampler under the title *Mystic*—the "cherry centers," as one of the producers calls it, of the complete recordings. Reinbert de Leeuw's account of *La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ* (on Audis Montaigne) had the composer—ever an appreciative auditor, often effusively so—in exceptional ecstasies, and one can understand why. The consensus of informed opinion has been fairly unkind to *Des Canyons aux étoiles*, commissioned by Alice Tully and inspired by Bryce Canyon and other Utah locales. Gaudy it is, but grand, and the long horn solo "Appel interstellaire" ("Interstellar Call") numbers among the most haunting passages in the Messiaen canon; Esa-Pekka Salonen's reading with the London Sinfonietta, on CBS Masterworks, shows the music to splendid advantage.

The very best place to start, however, is probably *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*. Which recording? Take your pick. Its song of hope that no power can shatter has inspired many responsive readings. ☼

The Revolution Upon Us

"All that is solid melts into air"—Karl Marx could have been describing the forces unleashed by the first truly global economy

by Lester C. Thurow

ONE WORLD, READY OR NOT:

The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism

by William Greider.
Simon & Schuster, 528 pages,
\$27.50.

SINCE "the manic logic of global capitalism" cannot be understood without hearing the vehemence of the language in *One World, Ready or Not*, listen to William Greider's thesis in his own, often eloquent words.

- "The logic of commerce and capital has overpowered the inertia of politics and launched an epoch of great social transformations."

"Our wondrous machine, withal its great power and creativity, appears to be running out of control toward some sort of abyss."

- "Financial investors monitor and punish corporations or whole industrial sectors if their returns weaken. Finance disciplines governments or even entire regions of the globe if those places appear to be creating impediments to profitable enterprise or unpleasant surprises for capital."

- "Well-known firms [Volkswagen, GM, Volvo, IBM, Eastman Kodak] have experienced the harsh consequences of straying from the path of revolution. Their stocks were hammered, their managements ousted, tens of thousands of employees discarded."

- "The present industrial revolution of 'one world' has now reached this pathological stage."

- "Certainly, enormous conflicts lie ahead for the peoples of the world, political and economic collisions, possibly

including the violence of wars between rival economies."

- "As the economic insecurities spread, resentments toward the dependent poor hardened."

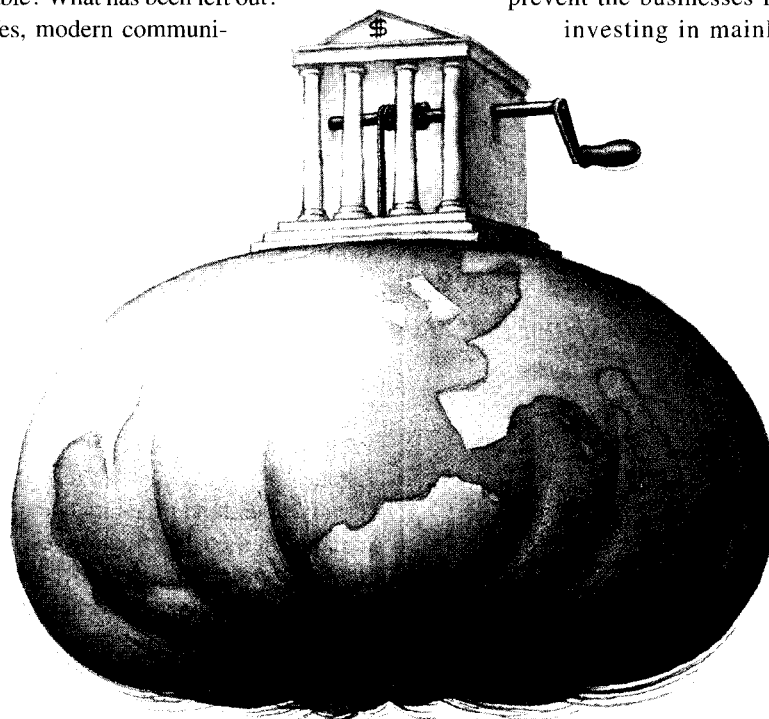
- "I am not predicting the replay of twentieth-century political history, the rise of a new Hitler or World War III and another Holocaust. But I do observe that the same social-economic forces are in deep collision again, agitating the same irrationalities and extreme reactions that arose from the last great upheaval of industrial revolution."

Strong stuff, this, in the service of Greider's bold argument that the logic of global capitalism is leading to a world-historical financial disaster. But how much of it is true? What part is debatable? What has been left out?

Yes, modern communi-

cation technologies have unleashed global finance. Just as clearly, capitalist financial markets are unstable. But financial crashes are as old as tulip mania in Holland in the 1630s or as young as the Japanese crash of the 1990s. And as we have just seen in Japan (a stock market that dropped by two thirds, property values that are down 60 to 80 percent and still falling), not even spectacular crashes change the economic system appreciably—much less bring it down.

Global finance does undercut governmental regulation. The Cayman Islands, population 35,000, are the fifth largest nation in the world in terms of booking bank loans, because businesses in Taiwan and elsewhere use them to avoid local government regulations that would prevent the businesses from investing in mainland



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China. But many would argue that technological deregulation is a good thing, since it stops governments from doing what they shouldn't be doing anyway.

National governments are played off against one another in bidding wars to attract industry, much as Alabama, bidding against other states, was led to pay an outlandish subsidy for its Mercedes automobile factory. But the governments (state or national) that make such payments are the economically foolish of the world. The winners know that other ways of spending their money—educating and training their labor forces—give a much bigger economic bang for the buck than bribery does.

Free-market ideological blinders in favor of deregulated, privatized markets do exist. When New Zealand—a country with zero percent per capita growth in gross domestic product over the past seven years—was ranked third on the World Economic Forum's index of national competitiveness mostly because it has done more deregulation and privatization than any other country, ideology certainly dominated reality. But there are pendulums in such fads, and the conventional wisdom will rather quickly return to a more balanced view.

SHARP exception, however, can be taken to the explicitly Marxist vision in *One World, Ready or Not* that surplus production, overcapacity, falling prices, declining rates of return on capital, and a rising global "reserve army of the unemployed" will generate the financial crisis that brings the system down. After a century and a half of being wrong, Marx's analysis is not likely suddenly to be right.

Marx's vision of capitalist overproduction did not take into account technological change and the uncrowded investment opportunities it creates. Cellular phones expanded the market for phones. The videocassette recorder became a household necessity but also expanded the market for movies. Mass tourism was born with the jet airplane, and along with it came the need for hotels, airports, and taxis in strange, previously isolated places. Electronic communications hardware has made culture and entertainment into one of the world's biggest industries. Movies and TV shows are a major American export.

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Privatized infrastructure investments provide great opportunities for absorbing capital in both the developed and the underdeveloped world. China's need for transportation and telecommunications infrastructure alone could absorb much of the world's capital supply. America's deteriorating infrastructure needs a great deal of capital as well. As governments retreat from these investments under the pressure of budget deficits, vast new opportunities open up for investors.

Sooner or later the central banks of the United States, Japan, and Germany, forced to recognize that the inflationary dangers of the 1990s are not those of the 1970s and 1980s, will relent and allow real growth rates to accelerate beyond their current low limits. Democracies are not forever going to allow the misguided fears of unelected central bankers to limit growth in ways that destroy both the economic system and democracy itself. Even a modest acceleration in world growth rates would absorb an enormous amount of capital—the surplus production that Greider sees as haunting twenty-first-century capitalism.

Capitalism also comes with an automatic feedback mechanism that prevents a gross excess of capacity. Seeing falling returns on new investments, capitalists consume their income rather than saving and investing it. Demand for consumer products goes up; investment in new consumer-goods factories goes down.

Greider's vision of overcapacity and falling returns clashes with his own arguments elsewhere in the book that a "rentier regime," with "real long-term interest rates . . . stuck at historically high levels," has been created by slow growth and repressive central-bank policies. Interest payments are up since the early 1970s. There is, as well, a lot of room to push capital's returns up by pushing labor's share down—by moving, or threatening to move, production to low-wage areas.

Greider is also inconsistent in his argument that global business now negotiates from a position of overwhelming strength vis-à-vis national governments and his view that governments outside the United States use the Japanese model of managed trade to sap American economic strength by forcing facilities to close in

the United States and re-open in their own countries. Governments with great power to manage trade and business firms with great power to avoid government management cannot simultaneously exist.

Greider rightly points out,

The ideas and programs that formed the modern welfare state originated from the values of the right as well as the left, from the conservative religious impulse to defend the domain of family, community and church against the raw, atomizing effects of market economics as well as from the egalitarianism of anti-capitalist socialism. The welfare state was, in fact, an attempt to devise a fundamental compromise between society and free-market capitalism.

Democracy is at its core a belief in radical equality—one person, one vote, no matter how smart or dumb, how hard-working or lazy, how well informed or ignorant. Such an egalitarian ideology cannot easily co-exist with ever rising income inequalities. What Greider leaves unexamined is the role of the state as an investor in the educational skills, research and development, and infrastructure necessary for growth in today's man-made brainpower industries and for the invention of the industries of tomorrow. In the end our societies will rise or fall not because of some financial boom or crisis but because of our willingness—or unwillingness—to make such social investments. They are our equivalent of the irrigation systems that underlay the prosperity of many ancient societies—and that were maintained or not.

Greider ends his book with a dark environmental paradox.

The collective dilemma, shared by rich and poor, fuses these social and economic dimensions: if industrial growth proceeds according to its accepted pattern, everyone is imperiled. Yet, if industrialization is not allowed to proceed, a majority of the world's citizens are consigned to a permanent second-class status, deprived of industrial artifacts that enhance life's comforts, the tools that multiply human choices.

The latter proposition, however troubling to environmentalists, is undoubtedly true. That is why it is important to say that Greider's clash between environmentalism and economic growth is not the simple one he outlines. Market economies

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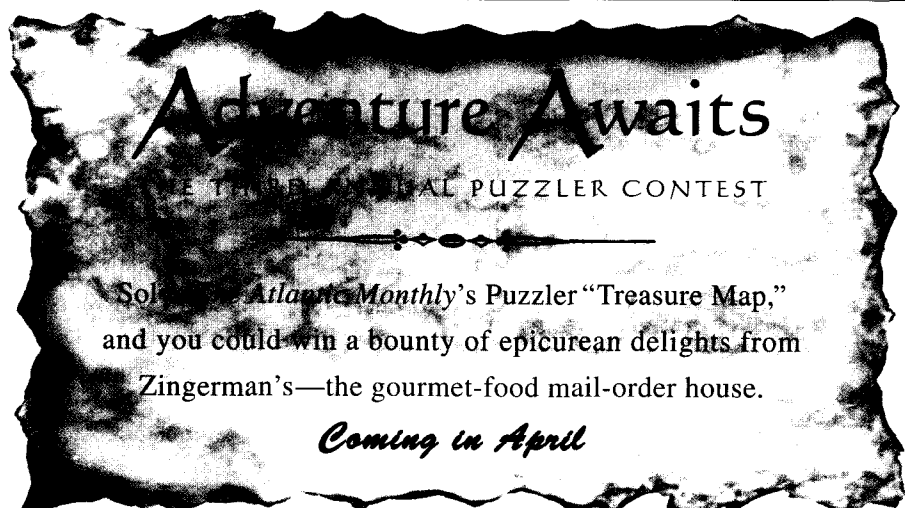
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deal quite nicely with limitations on natural resources. As resources become scarcer and rise in price, consumption falls, replacements are found, and resource deposits that were too expensive to recover become recoverable. Higher oil prices lead to more-fuel-efficient cars; the electric car starts to look like a viable option; and the tar sands of northern Alberta become a good source of oil.

Local environmental problems (smog, polluted rivers) are not automatically addressed by the market, but the desire of consumer-voters to live in a clean, healthful environment is going to lead to government regulations that quickly force the market to clean up its act. Most measures of local pollution have shown sharp improvements over the past twenty-five years in America. As incomes rise in the developing world, voters there will have an equal interest in a livable environment.

Where both the market and the political process fail is in dealing with global environmental issues, such as global warming and the thinning ozone layer over the North and South Poles, in which the effects occur over long periods of time and their severity is highly uncertain. Crises aren't clear; solutions can be postponed, and problems allowed to fester. The decline in quality of life is so slow that we don't notice it and therefore don't do anything about it.

IF the current economic system ends, it will be not in a spectacular crash but in a very slow decline, brought about by the system's inability to invest in its own future.

Here are Greider's solutions:

Restore national controls over global capital. Tax wealth more, labor less. Stimulate global growth by boosting consumer demand from the bottom up. Compel trading nations to accept more balanced trade relations and absorb more surplus production. Forgive the debtors, especially the hopeless cases among the very poorest nations. Reorganize monetary policy to confront the realities of a globalized money supply, both to achieve greater stability and open the way to greater growth. Defend labor rights in all markets, prohibit the ancient abuses renewed in the "dark Satanic mills." Withdraw from the old labor-capital battleground by universalizing access to capital ownership. Reformulate the

idea of economic growth to escape the wasteful nature of consumption. And, in the meantime, defend work and wages and social protections against assaults by the marketplace.

Many of these things would be good things to do. One does not have to believe in ever falling real wages to think that a compulsory savings system to broaden capital ownership would be a good thing. One does not have to believe that environmentally corrected per capita growth rates are a bad thing to want to eliminate some of the negatives that do exist. Belief in global free-market capitalism does not require belief in child labor and unsafe working conditions.

But these policy recommendations miss the central economic problem. Capitalism is myopic and cannot make the long-term social investments in education, infrastructure, and research and development that it needs for its own future survival. It needs government help to make those investments, but its own ideology won't allow it either to recognize the need for those investments or to request government help. That is the ideological paradox of our time. ☼

The Laureate as Onlooker

by Peter Davison

SUN UNDER WOOD

by Robert Hass.
Ecco Press, 77 pages,
\$22.00.

WHETHER or not they achieve permanent fame, certain poets speak for the sensibility of their era. We can even play the game of compiling a list of those poets who have best summed up their times. Mine would include, in England, George Herbert, whose purity and wit gathered in the religious intensity of the English Reformation; Alexander Pope, whose fabric came from the warp and woof of Newtonian England;

William Wordsworth, who exalted the sweep of the Romantic movement; A. C. Swinburne, who exulted in the *fin de siècle*. The visionary William Blake bypassed all eras and every whisper of dialect to speak directly to the receptive yet critical human soul: in his strangeness he stands above time and place, like Shakespeare or Dante.

On this side of the Atlantic, Ralph Waldo Emerson opened up the possibility of a New World birth of the spirit; Walt Whitman celebrated its joy and its triumph; Emily Dickinson annotated its secret self-appraisal. In our present century T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden spoke for "the age of anxiety"; yet with the passage of time it seems to be cunning old Robert Frost who most irresistibly enlists our attention and who, despite later shifts in fashion and form, keeps answering the fire bell.

Since Frost's death, in 1963, the strongest currents in American poetry may well have pushed westward, away from our European heritage and toward a more nativist outlook. No practicing poet has more talent than Robert Hass, who is, to our good fortune, the present and deserving United States poet laureate. At fifty-six, with four collections behind him, he also qualifies as representative of his time by having set himself two important translating enterprises that have taken him around the world in both directions: the Polish poetry of the Nobel laureate Czeslaw Milosz, which Hass has spent many years Englishing with the cooperation of its author, and Japanese *haiku*, an ancient art to which he has long devoted the delicacy of his attention. ("Summer is over, and / we part, like eyelids, / like clams opening.") In his fine book of criticism, *Twentieth Century Pleasures* (1984), Hass wrote eloquently on both subjects—and many others. Yet if we look to his poetry in its own right, we'll find him most understandable as a native son, a Californian Catholic with a first-class education and a poetic sensibility that probes kindly but firmly in all directions.

Twenty-five years ago Hass was writing the poems in his first book, *Field Guide* (1973), which displayed the mildness of his wit and the inclusiveness of his curiosity along with the firmness of his indignation—a book that embodied the sort of sauna gladness that comes after cleans-

ing sweat. It was as impressive a first collection as any of its decade. In *Praise* (1979), Hass broadened his canvas but to some extent lost control of its margins. The masterpiece "Heroic Simile" (first published in this magazine) extended the oriental and intimate qualities that Hass's first book had so winningly displayed, while the famous and beautiful "Meditation at Lagunitas," with its majestic opening, quietly set its hand on the wheel of the contemporary aesthetic.

All the new thinking is about loss. In this it resembles all the old thinking. . . .

a word is elegy to what it signifies.

On the other hand, his poems began to blur into a haze of contemplative passivity (characteristic also, more generally, of the aesthetic implicit in much new American poetry of the time), in which states of mind and feeling were rendered reflexively with passive, copulative, or auxiliary verbs and the present tense, as though poems were to be merely tickled into existence, instead of animating themselves as self-propelled, self-motivating creations.

Human Wishes (1989) turned to more passionate declarations, in which the intimate relations of men, women, and children—the life of the family, in fact—were urged into fresh and interactive colors; but the syntactical limitations that still governed literary fashion allowed Hass's poems to continue slumping into the posture of *being*, rather than becoming. Having evaded the full responsibilities of language, Hass's poems edged away into remote, descriptive, but in the end cramped quarters: only one of the poems in *Human Wishes*, a love poem titled "On Squaw Peak," broke into blossom, crackled into spontaneous motion. The others kept to a beautiful stillness.

HASS'S newest volume, *Sun Under Wood*, reaches deeper below the surface of his talent, but it continues the trend as a volume that primarily bears witness, that does not altogether participate. Like *Field Guide*, this book moves backward and forward in history, frequently from a Pacific perspective ("We settled an almost empty California," one meditation remarks). Though his poetry in the past has often verged on the personal, the erotic, and the wounded, Hass now enters a more specific personal his-

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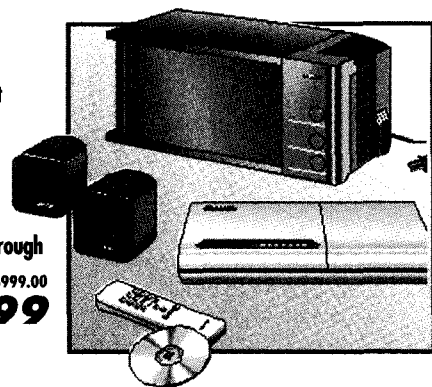


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tory and speaks ("Shame: An Aria," "My Mother's Nipples") of his alcoholic mother: "I didn't want to look, and looked, and looked away." "She was waiting for us to leave so she could start drinking." "I could hardly bear to look." Piercing poems in this mode mingle with landscape-haunted poems from Alaska, Korea, Warsaw, Iowa City, New Jersey, but the book has a way of returning to California and the compulsive intimacies of pain and self-reproach. The diction bears some affinity to Gary Snyder's Zen poems; but, even more than in Snyder's, the language and location would not seem alien to any land in the world.

Hass seems to wish to transcend the limitations of his earlier poetry by setting his verses loose to move and burn their own way into reality—but for some reason they won't go. When he speaks of the past, he speaks with imperfect freedom: "I had the idea that the world's so full of pain / it must sometimes make a kind of singing," leaving the shame and regret of the past to leak out of language into the country of music. It looks as though once he consented to penetrate a personal past, he was unable to free his language to move beyond a merely personal relevance. He all but apologizes.

Private pain is easy, in a way. It doesn't go away, but you can teach yourself to see its size. Invent a ritual. Walk up a mountain in the afternoon, gather up pine twigs. Light a fire, thin smoke, not an ambitious fire, and sit before it and watch it till it burns to ash and the last gleam is gone from it, and dark falls. Then you get up, brush yourself off, and walk back to the world. If you're lucky, you're hungry. ["Regalia for a Black Hat Dancer"]

Hass cannot seem to locate the kinetic energy to fuel his poems: he continues to reside, with sweet placidity, in and at the present, to stand pat, allowing his sensory equipment to supply him with evidence only as it reaches him through eye and ear and touch and taste.

I'm a little ashamed that I want to end this poem singing, but I want to end this poem singing— ["Interrupted Meditation"]

The charm and modesty remain, but these poems keep relaxing into the voice of an onlooker rather than taking on the energy of full participation—as though they came to the poet through a window, a filter, a screen of white noise and unscented air. It would seem that the verbs that Hass employs have not willingly enlisted in the fight for meaning. It's no accident, perhaps, that the jacket portrait, by Jock McDonald, on *Sun Under Wood* shows the poet gazing mournfully from the indoor side of a rain-rinsed window-pane, looking overcome by thoughts that lie too deep for tears. The upshot is a kind of poetry that hangs out a DO NOT DISTURB sign, leaving few bloodstains and engaging in little motion, like the deer in a poem called "The Woods in New Jersey":

Look: they move among the winter trees, so much the color of the trees, they hardly seem to move.

Stanley Kunitz once wrote, "Reading a poem by Robert Hass is like stepping into the ocean when the temperature of the water is not much different from that of the air. You scarcely know, until you feel the undertow tug at you, that you have entered into another element." To this reader it feels as though the undertow has slackened, as though the poems are willing to wound and yet afraid to strike. "Shame: An Aria" lays out the natural history of shame in a two-page sentence that has no principal verb, offering little but inertia to keep the poem moving—no fuel for the engine, no fodder for the horse. Other poems evince an ambition to mediate between Western knowledge and Eastern no-knowledge; but without verbal energy they fall short, for this disappointed reader, of realizing either resource. Think a little about the following sentence: "The core of the self, we learn early, is where shame lives." What poetry, what understanding, can be found in a statement put this way? In *Sun Under Wood* the poet mildly and calmly puts sensations into play, but something prevents his diction from establishing the work of his hands, from expressing his will. The consequence of mildness is smoothness; and as the most searching poem in this book, "Regalia for a Black Hat Dancer," severely pronounces, "Once you're smooth, you're dead." ☾

China's Strategic Culture

by Warren I. Cohen

CULTURAL REALISM:

Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History

by Alastair Iain Johnston.
Princeton University Press,
307 pages, \$39.50.

A RECENT visitor from Singapore, an able and well-informed reporter from the *Straits Times*, wanted me to know that the people of East Asia were uneasy about what they perceived as a crisis in Chinese-American relations and that they expected the United States to back off. Didn't we realize that the Chinese had never been an aggressive or expansionist power? As academics are wont to do, and despite my own misgivings about America's China policy or lack thereof, I took a few minutes to lecture him on the history of the Chinese empire, on thousands of years of attacks on China's neighbors—Vietnamese, Tibetans, Uighers, Mongols, Koreans, and countless minority peoples who had the misfortune to get in the way. And I told him to read Iain Johnston's book, *Cultural Realism*.

Chinese analysts invariably claim that Chinese strategic culture has been primarily defensive since Sun Zi produced his *Art of War* (circa the sixth century B.C.). Johnston, a young political scientist at Harvard, decided to test this premise of a uniquely Chinese, essentially pacific strategic culture, rooted in the Confucian-Mencian disparagement of the use of force. His methodology combines excruciatingly close textual analysis of the *Seven Military Classics* of ancient China, still a part of Chinese military discourse, with study of Ming dynasty (1368–1644) foreign-policy decisions. Johnston defines "strategic culture" as "ranked grand strategic preferences derived from central paradigmatic assumptions about the na-

ture of conflict and the enemy, and collectively shared by decision makers." A formidable mouthful—but a welcome relief from the vagueness with which the term is usually employed.

In the *Seven Military Classics*, Johnston finds evidence of two strategic cultures. There was a Confucian-Mencian-based set of assumptions and preferences for policies dependent on diplomacy and economic incentives, or on winning over one's foes through self-improvement and the example of Chinese rectitude, but it was largely symbolic, used primarily to justify behavior in culturally acceptable ways. This was augmented by an operational set of assumptions and policy preferences indistinguishable from the realpolitik practiced by much of the rest of the world. Ancient Chinese writers on strategy invariably concluded that the best way to respond to a threat was to eliminate it by force. Johnston contends that the Chinese classics stressed the value of violent solutions to security conflicts and of offensive over defensive strategies. True, they also called for flexibility, for using noncoercive means when confronting a more powerful enemy—but only as an expedient, until China could be sure of prevailing. Negotiations were a device for delaying action until the moment was auspicious. The goal would remain annihilation of the enemy. Johnston concludes that there was no pacifist bias in the Chinese strategic tradition but only realpolitik sometimes cloaked in Confucian-Mencian rationalizations.

Johnston's argument is strengthened by his examination of Ming strategic decision-making. He finds that the *Seven Military Classics* were widely read by Ming emperors, scholar officials, and military leaders, and were reflected in strategic texts of the time. His analysis of 120 memorials written by various Ming officials at various times notes the relative absence of references to Confucian-Mencian symbols and a conviction that the Mongols, the principal threat to the dynasty during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, must be met with force. The enemy was presumed likely to interpret concessions or a defensive posture as evidence of Chinese weakness. The application of military power was deemed essential to maintain Chinese credibility. Debate among policymakers focused not on basic assumptions

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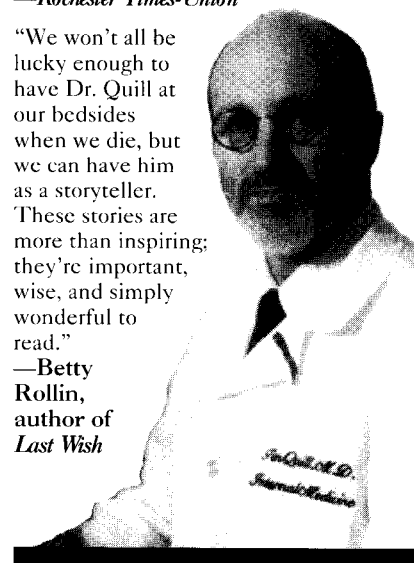
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The Golan Heights

To Whom Do They Belong? Can Israel Survive Without Them?

Now that Gaza and part of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") have been turned over to the Palestinians, the clamor for peace with Syria becomes ever more strident. Hafez Assad, Syria's president, has left no doubt, and it is generally understood that he will not make peace with Israel unless the Golan is returned to him in its entirety and without any conditions.

What are the facts?

Historical Background—The Golan was always part of the Jewish homeland. The Syrian claim to the Golan is tenuous. Syria, as a political entity, did not exist at all until after the first World War.

Even before the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Syrians subjected the villages in northern Israel to almost daily shellings, making normal life impossible. In the 1967 Six-Day War, Syria attacked Israel and was defeated. Israel occupied the Golan Heights and in 1981, for all practical purposes annexed the area.

Syria and its President—Syria is the most destabilizing influence in the Middle East. It is classified by the U.S. State Department as a narcotic-dealing and terrorist state. Its main fury is directed at Israel, which is perceived as a bulwark of Western influence and civilization, both of which Syria totally rejects.

Syria's President, Hafez Assad, is a tyrant, every bit as ruthless as Saddam Hussein. Syria is a world center for terrorism. It still harbors Nazi bigwigs, who found welcome there after the World War. Few doubt that Assad was the mastermind in the suicide attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut in which 241 Americans died, and in the explosion of Pan Am flight #103 in which 270 people lost their lives. He oversees one of the largest narcotics operations in the world.

In its keen desire to bring peace to its people, after almost fifty years of war and bloodshed, Israel had been prepared to make far-reaching concessions to Syria on the Golan, in exchange for real peace. But Benjamin Netanyahu, who has promised his people *shalom batuach* (peace with security) is not prepared to give up all of the Golan and to return to the "death trap" borders of 1967 or anything close to them. In order to survive within such borders, Israel would have to rely on the goodwill of the Arab states, most of which—with the recent exception of Jordan and of the cold peace with Egypt—are still in a declared state of war with Israel. An aggressor will attack only if confident of victory. With the Golan in Israeli hands, attacking Arabs could be confident of defeat, and peace would be preserved. To hand the Golan to Syria is a prescription for war and for Israel's destruction.

Military Security—The Golan is about the size of Queens, NY. If it were part of Syria it would be less than 1% of its territory. But it is of a supreme strategic importance to Israel. Its high ground provides early-warning capability, without which Israel would be subject to surprise attack by the Syrians. Its loss would obligate Israel to maintain a state of mobilization that would be economically and socially untenable. On the Golan itself, there are only two natural bottlenecks through which tanks can advance. Those choke points are defensible and made possible the repulse of

"With the Golan in Israeli hands, attacking Arabs could be confident of defeat and peace would be preserved. To hand the Golan to Syria is a prescription for war and for Israel's destruction."

1400 Syrian tanks that attacked Israel in the 1973 war. But with the Golan in Syrian hands, and without the radar installations that would give Israel warning of any military movements, thousands of tanks—backed up by missiles and airplanes—could overrun Israel in a matter of hours. The Golan does not make for perfect defense, but it gives Israel a small breathing space for mobilization.

The Golan is the source of over one-third of Israel's fresh water. In 1964, with the Golan in Syrian hands, Syria attempted to divert these headwaters and to cripple Israel's water supply. It is more than likely that, given another opportunity, Syria would once again attempt to destroy Israel's water supply.

but on the question of whether the Ming were strong enough to prevail at a given moment. Johnston leaves little doubt that Ming leaders, well versed in traditional strategic thought, consistently chose war whenever they believed that Chinese power was adequate to defeat their adversaries. Neither Bismarck nor Kissinger would find their reasoning alien—nor would they consider it uniquely Chinese.

JOHNSTON'S findings suggest the need for a re-examination of the strategic behavior of the People's Republic of China. His book cites a study by Jonathan Wilkenfield, Michael Brecher, and Sheila Moser that indicates that the PRC, involved in eleven foreign-policy crises from 1950 to 1985, resorted to violence in eight of them, or 72 percent of the time—far more often, proportionally, than any other major power in the twentieth century. China, Johnston argues, is much more likely than other states to use force in territorial disputes, partly because of historical sensitivity to threats to China's territorial integrity. The continuing contretemps over Taiwan is a case in point. He contends that Chinese leaders in Mao's day had a low threshold as to what constituted a danger to the security of the state. And China's willingness to use force has grown with the improvement in its capability. It is more likely to be confrontational as it grows stronger.

Johnston prudently offers a disclaimer: "None of this is meant to imply that contemporary China has inherited a predisposition to aggressive, offensive uses of force." He will go only so far as to say that China does have an operative strategic culture, that it is not unique, that it approximates Western versions of realpolitik—and that the Chinese in fact have been more likely than others to resort to force to cope with perceived threats. A less prudent reader, like me, viewing Chinese behavior since Tiananmen Square and trying to predict Chinese actions in the future, might think there is justification for carrying the lesson further.

Recent works by Chen Jian and Zhang Shuguang, Chinese scholars in the United States, reinforce the idea that Mao Zedong was undeterred by the prospect of confrontation with the United States in 1950 and that his decision to intervene in the Korean War was intended to inflict a

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blow sufficient to eliminate the threat he perceived from the United States. China today is far more powerful than it was in 1950, and its relative strength is expected to grow rapidly over the next decade. Given what Johnston has taught us about China's strategic culture, have we any reason to assume that Chinese leaders will be less bellicose in the years ahead?

Again, Johnston's analysis implies an answer. From ancient times to the present, Chinese leaders have insisted upon operational flexibility, on retaining the option of accommodation when estimates of the adversary's strength and determination indicate little chance of victory. But the determination to resist Chinese transgressions has not been apparent anywhere. In recent years, especially during the Clinton presidency, Washington has signaled Beijing that the United States cares about little except trade, and that American concern for human rights in China, for the oppressed Tibetans, for democracy in Hong Kong, for nuclear nonproliferation, is merely symbolic—rhetoric designed to be culturally acceptable to Congress and the electorate. As

the Chinese have violated their agreements, mistreated their people, and intimidated their neighbors, American businesspeople and the U.S. Department of Commerce have assured them that their market for goods and capital is essential to the U.S. economy. Not unreasonably, they have assumed that if they step up their intimidation of Taiwan, they have nothing to fear from the United States.

My visitor from Singapore also expressed the widely held view that the next generation of Chinese leaders will be more cosmopolitan and easier to live with. If Johnston's analysis of China's strategic culture is correct—and I believe that it is—generational change will not guarantee a kinder, gentler China. Nor will the ultimate disappearance of communism in Beijing. The powerful China we have every reason to expect in the twenty-first century is likely to be as aggressive and expansionist as China has been whenever it has been the dominant power in Asia—except when its leaders have reason to believe that potential adversaries have both the power and the determination to stop them. ☸

BRIEF REVIEWS



The Warrior Generals: Combat Leadership in the Civil War

by Thomas B. Buell.
Crown. 528 pages, \$35.00.

Mr. Buell's purpose is the correction of what he believes to be the general and erroneous assumption that Confederate commanders were superior to those of the Union. To that end he compares the performances of Grant and Lee, Thomas and Hood, and Barlow and Gordon, emphasizing that the Federals were more innovative in procedure and quicker to make effective use of advances in weaponry. Thomas is a good example. Serving in

Tennessee under Rosecrans, who saw the possibilities of well-armed mounted infantry (no sabers), he encouraged Colonel John Wilder to collect mounts for five infantry regiments. The Army's ordnance chief had refused to order the new Spencer repeating rifle in quantity, on the ground that it wasted ammunition. Wilder and his men ordered enough Spencers to equip their entire brigade and "paid for them out of their pockets." They then "thundered off and disappeared into the rain," and so discomfited Confederate General Bragg that he evacuated Tennessee. In accounting for items like Wilder's Lightning Brigade, Mr. Buell provides a great deal of background information, much of it drawn from sources

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usually ignored. His basic purpose is never forgotten, but it becomes embedded in a sizable, always interesting history of the whole war. Mr. Buell can describe terrain, evoke conditions, and summarize action briskly and lucidly. His sometimes unorthodox opinions are stated bluntly. Even those who refute his premise should find the book's unfamiliar detail and good writing rewarding—and Mr. Buell does have an initial point in his favor. The Federals won.

The Ordinary Seaman

by Francisco Goldman.

Atlantic Monthly Press,

387 pages, \$22.00.

Mr. Goldman's novel is based on reality—the fact that crewmen of a ship sailing under a flag of convenience have no legal status in an American port and cannot go ashore even to request help. The novel's characters are fifteen men from Central America, recruited to work on a ship under repair in Brooklyn. Only two of them have any previous maritime experience. From the decrepit vessel docked at the far reaches of a decrepit pier, observing the Statue of Liberty in the distance, one of these decides that the ship will sail when that statue walks. The men are marooned, dependent for supplies on erratic provisioning by the captain and the first officer. They are not paid. They are, in effect, slaves. As long as Mr. Goldman confines himself to the memories, dreams, ingenuities, and makeshifts of his unlucky castaways, the novel is absorbing and moving. When he veers off into the affairs of the officers, who are more fools than villains, the momentum flags. The book remains, however, a touching and provocative portrayal of honest innocents caught in a legal limbo.

Georges de La Tour and His World

by Philip Conisbee and others.

Yale, 319 pages, \$50.00.

The painter La Tour was baptized at Vic-sur-Seille, in Lorraine, in 1593. He married well in 1617 and died, still in Lorraine, in 1652. He engaged in business deals and arguments with the tax collector. There is considerable information about such matters, none of it having any bearing on La Tour's art. Influences, teachers, travels, technical or stylistic de-

velopments—all the topics that excite art specialists—are matters of speculation. The specialists contributing to this survey of an exhibition at the National Gallery, in Washington, have therefore applied themselves to La Tour's world. They cover the history of the Duchy of Lorraine, which was swallowed up by Richelieu's France during the painter's lifetime. They report on the local painters with whom he might have studied, the contemporaries (Caravaggio, Callot) who might have influenced him, and the patrons (the King, the cardinal) who may have valued his work. The result is a lively and fascinating exploration of artistic fashion and public taste in the first half of the seventeenth century, lavishly illustrated, intelligently organized, and well written. Anything one wants to know about La Tour's methods, lighting effects, subject matter, or subtle evocation of character is here—provided that it is knowable at all.

The Club Dumas

by Arturo Pérez-Reverte,

translated by Sonia Soto.

Harcourt Brace, 362 pages, \$23.00.

Mystery addicts who believe that the genre has certain rules of fair play will be infuriated by Mr. Pérez-Reverte's gothic eccentricities. Readers with a taste for Dumas and demonology will enjoy his devious inventions.

Texaco

by Patrick Chamoiseau,

translated by Rose-Myriam Réjouis

and Val Vinokurov.

Pantheon, 416 pages, \$27.00.

Mr. Chamoiseau's glittering multilingual novel presents 150 years of history on the island of Martinique as stories and fantasies in which events are given the power of metaphor. His principal narrator is Marie-Sophie Laborieux, descendant of slaves and indomitable guiding spirit of an illegal shantytown that has fought its way to acceptance as part of the city whose growth threatens to obliterate all other life on the island. "In what I tell you," Marie-Sophie explains, "there's the almost-true, the sometimes-true, and the half-true." Her history, as imagined by Mr. Chamoiseau, is more exciting than "the true-true" could ever be.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams



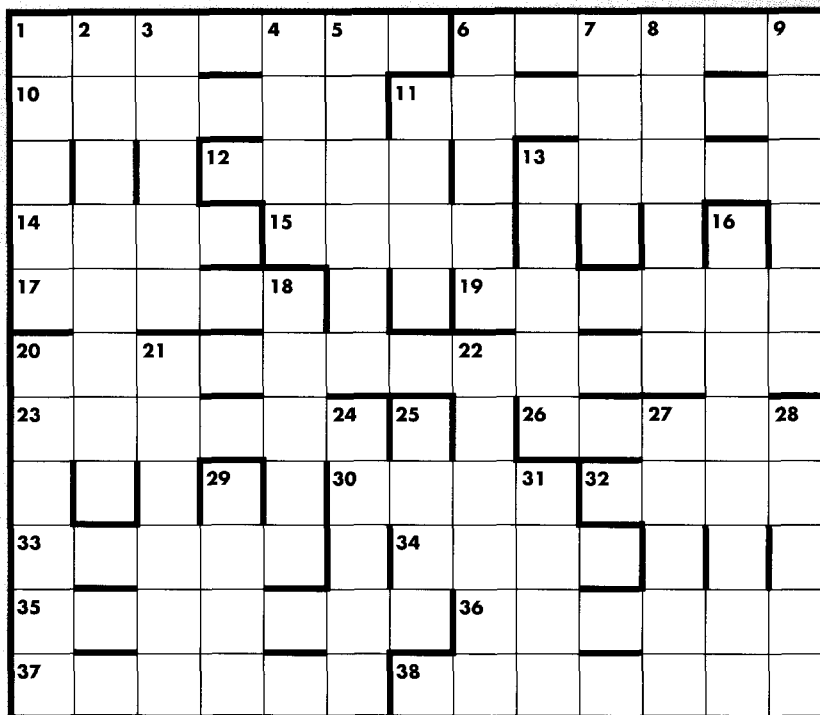
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Dress Code

Eighteen of this puzzle's diagram entries should be made to adhere to a certain dress code. The definitions in the clues for those 18 entries are normal, but the wordplay (anagram, charade, homophone, etc.) in each case is missing a common element. The missing element suggests how to dress the affected entries in the diagram, with a shade of inspiration from 20 Across (the unclued central entry in the diagram). Lengths are given for the undressed parts only. Nine diagram entries are capitalized; the answer at 23 Across is an alternate spelling.

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 96.



Across

1. Someone under patronage of peer got dressed (7)
6. Without resistance, roots for Army personnel (6)
10. Losing face, defame Eskimo, perhaps (6)
11. Leave a little shy one with a flower (7)
12. Current coming from speakers is a hazard for sailors (4)
13. Fight involving southern baseball team's nickname (5)
14. Poet's black and blue, beset by age (4)
15. Go imitate an instrument (4)
17. Star is turning channel (5)
19. Northern tribe housed in tin shelter (6)
23. Old magistrate ordered porter (6)
26. Premium for purchasing cap in Spain (5)
30. I'd sounded envious (4)
32. Mountain of bones? (4)

33. Young fruit's outer peel eaten by monkey (5)
34. Petty plan (4)
35. Man's mother absorbed by less moving ballad (7)
36. Casablanca actor about boarding: "Don't change it" (6)
37. Phone cute alien comic-book hero (6)
38. Terry, traveling about space, is coming back to Earth (7)

Down

1. Practices balletic moves (5)
2. Teacher with test in place for pets (8)
3. Over and over, wrapping one scallion (5)
4. Fish winds up headless (4)
5. Produce seller and recreation organization affected by recession (6)
6. Peripheral areas left somewhat wild for Socks (5)
7. Tie up counter in theater lounge (4)
8. In conclusion, petition resulted (6)
9. Japanese company keeping chopper in part of Germany (6)
11. Live with one—it's a snap (4)
13. Cash most of bad checks (5)
16. Trucker bridges unite Amsterdam (8)
18. Jewelers ultimately pitch variety of jade (5)
20. In frame, place dramatic display (6)
21. Look around very quietly for veggie that's not ripe (6)
22. Returned watch surfaced with revolutionary moon material? (6)
24. Bum steer makes you adjust (5)
25. Health clubs (gay) forgetting a woman's address (4)
27. Holding hound behind the head (5)
28. Nader's group in power having creative pretensions (5)
29. Valley is low, in general (4)
31. See fruit (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.

WORD COURT

by Barbara Wallraff

I seethe when some pompous fool uses the indefinite article *an* before historian, historic, or historical. The rule regarding articles appears to be quite simple and straightforward: one uses a before sounded consonants, including the palatalized y, as in a cat, a year, or a urologist, and an before vowel sounds or unvoiced consonants, as in an apple or an hour. So what's with supposedly educated people saying an historian?

Frank Moore III
Columbus, Ga.

You aren't alone if you consider this construction about on a par with inventing a coat of arms to put on one's stationery. Americans at least since Mark Twain have been deriding the use of *an* before words beginning with an aspirated,



or audible, *h*. Nonetheless, traditional British usage did call for it when the *h* word's initial syllable was unaccented—thus a *HISTo*ry but an *his*torian.

Even in England the *an* is now considered an affectation, though R. W. Burchfield's *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage*, published by Oxford last year, urges readers not to "demur" if others employ the construction.

I am writing to express dismay and bafflement over some terms I have encountered recently in the obituary columns of local newspapers. I do not find them in any of the dictionaries I own. One obituary listed the date of the memorial service and then gave a later date as the time of inurnment. Since this event was to be held in a cemetery, I presume that the body had been cremated and the ashes were to be buried or interred after being placed in an

urn. It seems to me the word *interment* would have been sufficient.

The next shocker was an obituary that stated that the cremains would be shipped to another state for disposition. I suppose some people find the term *ashes* distasteful, but whoever dreamed up cremains?

And then the last straw! The paper announced that Mrs. So and So would be funeralized on such and such a date. What are your thoughts?

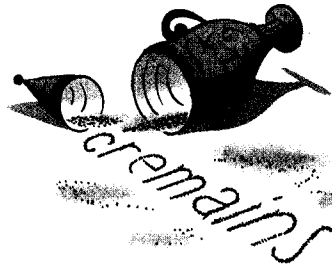
Anna D. Shepard
Murphy, N.C.

I think it might be time for you to buy a new dictionary. Each of these words is in at least three of the five dictionaries that I regularly consult, and has been in use for decades. Of course, you don't have to use these words, or like them, no matter what dictionaries say (and you might even consider reducing the offending dictionary to *cremains*). But your not unreasonable protest is more a matter of what you find to be in good taste than what is acceptable English.

In the town of Cortlandt, New York, a waterfront park on the Hudson River will be opening soon. The central purpose of the park is to provide access to the river for people interested in fishing. The name of the park—the subject of our dispute—is intended to reflect this fact.

The first name suggested was Annsville Fishermen's Point. This name was rejected for its sexist connotations, and Fishermen's was changed to Fishers. The question is, should the possessive form be used, making it Annsville Fishers' Point? The park does not belong to fishers, nor will it be used solely by fishers.

If you respond quickly enough, we

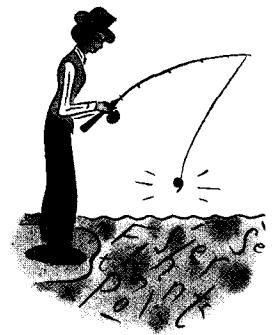


will incorporate your decision into the actual name of the park, and the form you prefer will appear on the plaque upon dedication. Please help us out.

Mark Sullivan
Hawthorne, N.Y.

I can't talk you into Annsville Fishing Point, can I? It isn't clear what *Fishers* means. *Fishermen's* is clear, and in my opinion a bit too much is being renounced as sexist these days—but people will object, and it does you credit that you are taking everyone's feelings into account. *Fishers*, though, could be . . . lustrous dark-brown cousins of the weasel? Persons with that surname? Who knows?

If you must have *Fishers*: On the one hand, the apostrophe (after the *s*, as you have it) is appropriate, because the meaning is the same as with *Fishermen's*. Possessives don't necessarily signal what we'd think of as ownership: think of a *day's journey* or *for pity's sake*. The relationship between the people fishing and the park will be possessive in a grammatical sense. On the other hand, the official U.S. entity in charge of geographic names strongly discourages apostrophes in place-names. And here—where, again, it isn't clear what the word *Fishers* means—the apostrophe probably does serve little purpose. I would leave it out.



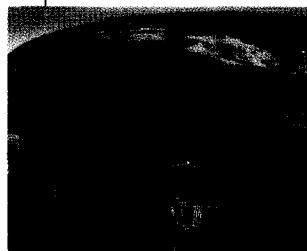
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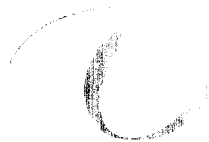
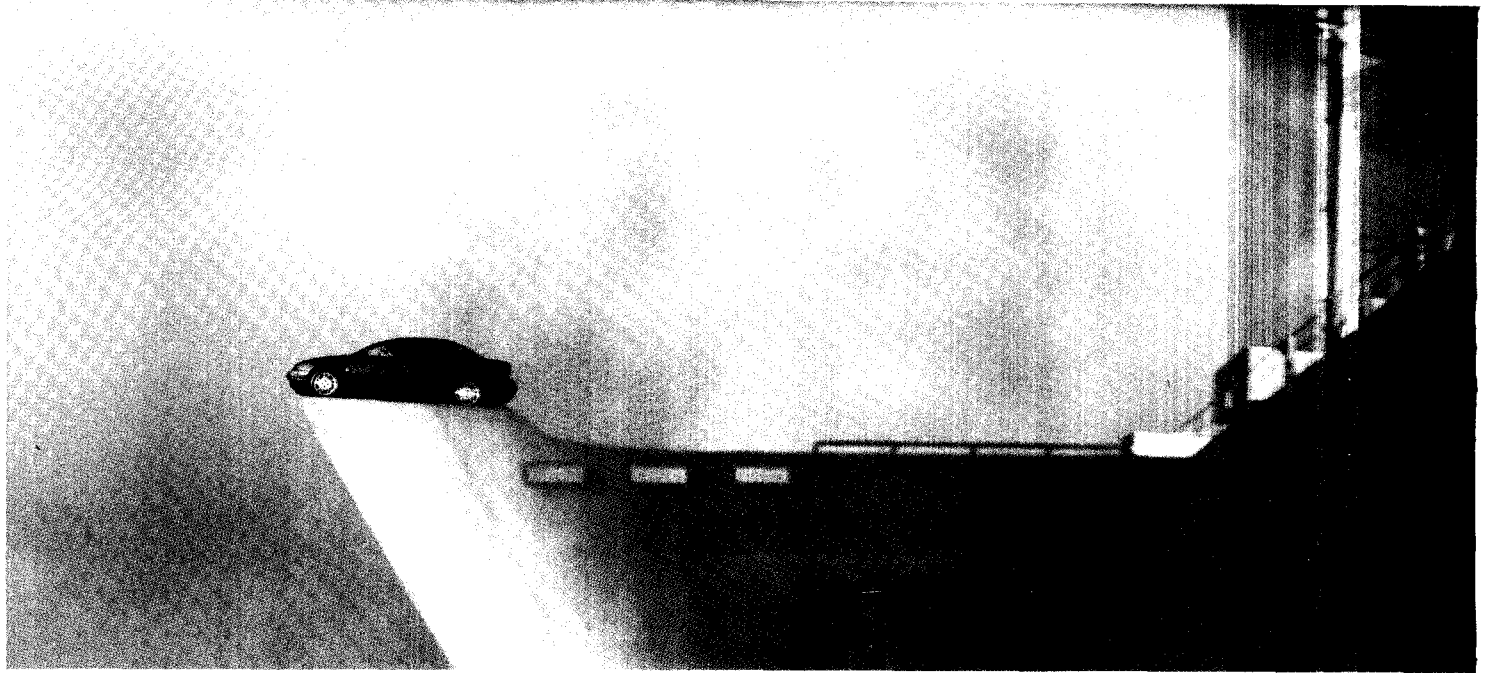


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